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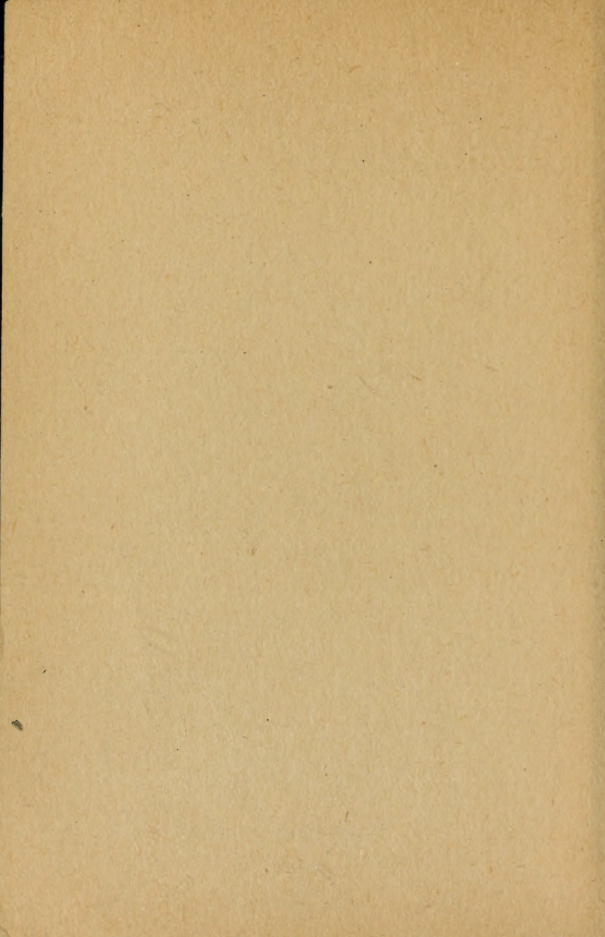
**Edited by E. Haldeman-Julius**

**758**

# **The Frogs**

**Aristophanes**

**Translated from the Greek by  
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**HALDEMAN-JULIUS COMPANY**  
**GIRARD, KANSAS**

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## CHARACTERS IN THE COMEDY

*Bacchus*: god of wine.

*Xanthias*: his servant.

*Donkey*.

*Hercules*: a giant.

*Dead Man*.

*Charon*: ferryman of the Styx.

*Frogs*: lurking in the pools of the Styx.

*Chorus*: made up of ghosts of clowns, girls, loafers, ladies, gentlemen, toppers, all of whom have been initiated while on earth in the Eleusinian mysteries and are hence called "Mystae."

*Acacus*: a magistrate in Hades.

Slave to the Queen of Hades.

*Two Landladies*.

*Euripides*: a tragic poet.

*Aeschylus*: another tragic poet.

*Pluto*: lord in Hell.

Girl with her dress torn.

Girl with bones.

Wandering ghosts, retinue of Pluto, mutes, sporting characters and shades of the dead in war.

*Scene*: Hades or its vestibule

*Time*: The Peloponnesian War.



# THE FROGS

## SCENE I

*A somewhat rugged country is disclosed, with a suggestion of forest-clad hills in the distance. A rustic lane is well to the front. Palings at the left indicate a farmer's garden. On the extreme right is a temple.*

*Bacchus emerges from the left, slowly. He is clad in a bright robe extending to his knees and a lion skin hangs carelessly over his left shoulder. Bacchus is a somewhat effeminate youth with long well oiled hair and sandals laced well to his knee.*

*Bacchus has meandered to the center of the scene when Xanthias emerges from the left mounted on a donkey. The baggage of Bacchus and of Xanthias is supported on a pole strung across the back of the donkey. Xanthias is a servant—a respectable middle-aged man wearing a gray cloak and black leather sandals on a pair of large feet. Across the back of Xanthias is a yoke with projecting pegs upon which are strung packages of different sizes. Xanthias is obviously inconvenienced by the weight of this contrivance.*

*Xanthias. I'm going to get off some of the gags, master, at which the people in the audience always laugh.*

*Bacchus. By Jove, anything you like, except that "I'm being crushed." Watch out for that! It's altogether overdone.*

*Xanthias.* Nothing else cityfied?

*Bacchus.* Nothing but "How I suffer!"

*Xanthias.* What? I'm to say what's altogether ridiculous?

*Bacchus.* By Jove, impudently, too! So long as you don't say that one thing.

*Xanthias.* What thing?

*Bacchus.* That you're having a bowel movement whenever you're throwing the porter's pack about.

*Xanthias.* Mustn't I even say I'm breaking wind because of the heavy burden that ought to have been lifted? (*He groans as he shifts the yoke to another shoulder.*)

*Bacchus.* No—no—only when I'm ready to vomit, by the gods!

*Xanthias.* Why then must I bear these goods about if I'm not to do any of the things Phrynichus (*a dramatist who excelled in horseplay*) is so used to doing as well as Lycis (*presumably a comic poet of the period*) and Ameipsias (*a popular playwright*). Don't they always carry baggage in comedy?

*Bacchus.* Don't do it now. When I'm at the theater and see any of these sophisticated doings I'm more than a year older when I come away.

*Xanthias.* Oh, three fiends are on this neck of mine in that case. Although it's all in mourning, it must not speak a jest.

*Bacchus.* But is it not likewise an outrage

and a manifold impertinence besides that I, the son of the wine jar (*he was god of wine*), must walk myself and be weary while I give this fellow a ride so that he may not be overwhelmed with weariness and endure pain while carrying things himself?

*Xanthias.* But I do carry, don't I?

*Bacchus.* How are you carrying when you're riding?

*Xanthias.* Carrying this thing. (*The yoke.*)

*Bacchus.* How—in what way?

*Xanthias.* With difficulty—together.

*Bacchus.* But this burden that you're bearing—doesn't the donkey bear it?

*Xanthias.* Not at all! What I'm holding and carrying? No, indeed!

*Bacchus.* How do you bear when you're yourself being borne by another?

*Xanthias.* I don't know. This shoulder is crushed just the same.

*Bacchus.* But since you say the donkey is of no assistance to you, why don't you for your own sake (*or in your turn*) lift the donkey up and carry it?

*Xanthias.* Oh, fiend that I am! Why didn't I, too, fight at sea? (*Slaves who volunteered for the naval battles of the war then raging gained their freedom.*) I would long since have told you to go howling.

*Bacchus.* Get down, rogue! I'm now near this door, the very door I wanted to come to



in the first place after all my walking. (*Bacchus goes to the temple and begins a knocking at the portal.*) Little boy! Boy! Boy, I say!

The door is thrown open with some suddenness. A burly figure appears. It is Hercules. Hercules bears a club in one hand. His loins are invested with a bear skin. His hair is matted but short and he wears huge buskins.

Hercules (*hoarsely*). Who knocked upon the door? How like a centaur he dashed up, whoever it may be! (*Stares at Bacchus.*) Tell me—what's all this?

Bacchus (*abashed, turns to Xanthias*). Oh, boy!

Xanthias. What is it?

Bacchus. Did you not wonder?

Xanthias. What's that?

Bacchus. How terribly he feared me.

Xanthias. By Jove, don't rave. (*Or, he was afraid you'd go mad.*)

Bacchus. (*Looks fierce.*)

Hercules. By Ceres, I'm unable to keep from laughing. (*He compresses his lips.*) I'm biting myself. Nevertheless, I'm laughing.

Bacchus. Oh, divinity, come here! I need you.

Hercules. But I'm not one to keep from laughing, seeing a lion's hide over a saffron robe (*the saffron-hued robe was worn for the festivals of Bacchus by women. The lion skin was the apparel of a hero in battle*). What's the idea? What have the actor's boot and the bludgeon in common? In what part of the world have you been in exile?

*Bacchus.* I went aboard with Cleisthenes (*an effeminate politician who fought in the naval battles*).

*Hercules.* And you were in a sea fight?

*Bacchus.* And sunk the ships of the enemy too—twelve or thirteen.

*Hercules.* You too?

*Bacchus.* We did, by Apollo!

*Xanthias.* (*In the style of a man aroused from a dream.*) And then I, too, awoke! (*A line from a tragedy in which a fantastic dream occurs.*)

*Bacchus.* In fact, aboard the ship, as I was reading the "Andromeda" (*a popular play*) to myself, my heart was seized by a sudden longing—how are you to tell how tremendously?

*Hercules.* Longing? How great?

*Bacchus.* Slight, like Molon. (*Who acted in the Andromeda and tried to look bigger than he was.*)

*Hercules.* Longing for a woman?

*Bacchus.* Not at all.

*Hercules.* You've been with Cleisthenes?

*Bacchus.* Don't spy me out brother. This is no jest—I feel ill. Such a longing maddens me.

*Hercules.* What is it like, little brother?

*Bacchus.* I'm not to tell. However, I'll reveal it to you in a riddle. Have you ever longed all of a sudden for porridge?

*Hercules.* Porridge? Surely. Many a time in my life.

*Bacchus.* Shall I confess it to you openly or shall I phrase it in a round about way? (*Am I plain?*)

*Hercules.* Not about the porridge—I understand that perfectly. (*A jest at a lost tragedy.*)

*Bacchus.* In just that way was I seized with a longing for Euripides—

*Hercules.* And he dead too? (*Hercules conceives Bacchus as seized with a passionate longing for the poet, although the poet is a corpse. The porridge referred to was at some seasons a love philtre.*)

*Bacchus.* Now no man could persuade me not to set forth in quest of that poet.

*Hercules.* Even to hell below?

*Bacchus.* Yes, by Jove—even to where it's lower yet.

*Hercules.* What is it you want?

*Bacchus.* I'm in need of a competent poet (*Euripides and others had made tragedies about Bacchus but they did not evidently please the god*) for some are dead and some are bad. (*This was a famous line from Euripides, the play itself being lost.*)

*Hercules.* What of it? Isn't Iophon alive?

*Bacchus.* He's the only thing left that's good if he really is good. (*He was a son of Sophocles but no genius.*) I don't know how to rate him. (*He was said to have palmed off his father's work for his own.*)

*Hercules.* Then it is Sophocles, he who is ahead of Euripides, you mean to lead up from below? Evidently, you must bring someone up?

*Bacchus.* Not before I have taken Iophon

apart from everyone else to discover what he is capable of without Sophocles. That Euripides, moreover, being a vile character, would be only too glad to run up here with me. The other was happy here and he'd be happy there.

*Hercules.* But Agathon (*a great playwright*)—where is he?

*Bacchus.* Having taken his departure, he abandons me (*just as the other poets did by dying*). He was a good poet and much in request among his friends.

*Hercules.* Where in the world is the poor devil?

*Bacchus.* Among the blessed feasters (*Dead*).

*Hercules.* And Xenocles?

*Bacchus.* To hell with him, by God!

*Hercules.* Pythangelus—what of him? (*These last two names were those of playwrights.*)

*Bacchus.* Yet are there not some hundreds and hundreds of mere boys up here making innumerable rattling tragedies and all more verbose by the length of a race course than even Euripides?

*Xanthias* (*muttering as he shifts the burden of baggage about his neck*). Not a word in all this about me although my shoulder is horribly chafed.

*Bacchus.* They are all triflers with sheets and rolls of parchment and mouthers of pettiness, chirruping birds (*a phrase from a Euripidean tragedy*) who bring humiliation upon their medium and of whom we hear no more

if they but get a chorus approved after having on one occasion only ventured into tragedy. An original poet you would not discover if you were to search everywhere now for one capable of saying anything immortal, or creative. (Or fruitful.)

*Hercules.* What do you mean by creative?

*Bacchus.* He is creative who can mouth some little piece of impertinence like "Thou Ether, abode of Jove" or "Foot of Time" or "The brain was not willing to make oath by holy things so the tongue swore apart from the brain." (*Quotations from tragedies of the time.*)

*Hercules.* These things please you?

*Bacchus.* Enough to make me rave over them.

*Hercules.* They're twaddle, as even you can see.

*Bacchus.* Don't live in my mind. You've a house to live in. (*A quotation from a popular tragedy.*)

*Hercules.* Yet they seem absolutely destitute of art. (*He refers to the quotations.*)

*Bacchus.* Teach me to eat. (*Hercules was a glutton. He could teach gastronomy, not tragedy.*)

*Xanthias* (*shifting his burden*). Not a word about me.

*Bacchus.* Now, as regards those matters for the sake of which I've all this baggage (*indicating the lion skin he wears*) in mimicry of yourself, and as regards your hosts—in case I need them—who served you when you went



for Cerberus (*the dog who guarded an infernal portal*), tell me about them—the ports, the bread shops, the obscene resorts, the sitting rooms, the inns, the waters, the roads, the towns, the apartments, the landladies and where vermin are scarcest.

*Xanthias.* (*Flicking the donkey.*) Still not a word about me.

*Hercules.* Savage man—will you dare to go?

*Bacchus.* Now don't you argue any more about it, but tell me the paths by which I can soonest arrive in Hades below. Don't speak of a hot way nor of one that's very cold.

*Hercules.* What one shall I tell you about first? Which one? For if you are willing to be suspended, there's one that requires a rope and a chair.

*Bacchus.* Stop—you talk of choking.

*Hercules.* There's a direct and well kept path involving the use of a mortar.

*Bacchus.* It's of hemlock you're talking? (*Drinking poison.*)

*Hercules.* Of course.

*Bacchus.* Cold and difficult. It soon benumbs the limbs.

*Hercules.* Do you want me to tell you a swift and downward way?

*Bacchus.* By Jove—of course—I'm not a walker!

*Hercules.* Stroll down to the outer Cerameicus (*a cemetery in Athens*).

*Bacchus.* Then what?

*Hercules.* Climb up the high tower.

*Bacchus.* Then what will I do?

*Hercules.* Watch a torch flaming down from there and then when those who see you bid you hurl it down drop down yourself. (*There is some dispute regarding the correct translation.*)

*Bacchus.* Where?

*Hercules.* Below.

*Bacchus.* Then I'd spoil my pair of brain puddings. I won't walk that way.

*Hercules.* What then?

*Bacchus.* The way you once went down.

*Hercules.* But it's a long sail. You'll come at once to a big lake with no bottom.

*Bacchus.* But how will I get on the other side?

*Hercules.* An old sailor in a little boat as big as my thumb will pilot you over when he has been given his pay of a pair of oboles.

*Bacchus.* Phew! What immense influence everywhere have the pair of oboles. How did they arrive over there too?

*Hercules.* Theseus took them. (*He first bribed old Charon, the boatman, who was thus taught tipping.*) After that you'll see countless serpents and dreadful wild beasts.

*Bacchus.* Don't dumbfound me nor threaten me. You won't turn me aside.

*Hercules.* Then there'll be much slush and layers of filth. Prone in it all will be anyone who has wronged a guest or played the pimp

or beaten his mother or hit his father on the jaw or perjured himself or written out a speech by Morsimus. (*A tragic poet and playwright much ridiculed by Aristophanes.*)

Bacchus. There should be, too, besides these, anyone who has learned the Pyrrhic dance of Cinesias. (*The poet who was so lean as to look comical and who wrote a war dance.*)

Hercules. Next you'll be thrilled with the sound of lutes and you will behold the loveliest light, like that of day here, and myrtle trees and revelling bands of men and women and much hand clapping.

Bacchus. What will those things be?

Hercules. The initiates (*the reference is to the initiated worshippers of Ceres or Demeter, the Mystae, who spent their time happily in Hades.*)

Xanthias. By Jove, I'm the ass that carries the burden of celebrating the mysteries (*the mysteries are those of Eleusis, celebrated with solemnity and pomp, donkeys carrying the holy vessels and other baggage and being much wearied with the load of them.*) I won't be crushed under these all the time. (*He drops the baggage on the ground.*)

*The expression used by Xanthias was a proverb.*

Hercules (*to Bacchus*). They'll tell you whatever you have to know. They are the nearest along the road winding about the doors of those who dwell in the realm of Pluto. May

you have many reasons to rejoice, brother.  
(*He re-enters his temple and slams the portal.*)

Bacchus. By Jove—I hope you have good health, too! (*To Xanthias*). You lay hold of the luggage again.

Xanthias. Before I'm down myself?

Bacchus. Yes—and very quickly, too.

Xanthias. Ah! No! I beg of you! Pay one of the men now being carried out (*to his funeral*) so that he may come to this place.

Bacchus. What if I have no one?

Xanthias. Then it will be for me to induce someone.

Bacchus. Well said. For here's somebody dead being borne away now. (*A long line of mourners is seen following a bier upon which a shrouded form lies. The priest with his torch bearers closes the procession. Bacchus calls to the fellow in charge of the flowers.*) This one—I call you, you're the one I—(*not being noticed, he changes his purpose*) you, the dead one, say! Man, do you want to carry some luggage into Hell?

*The dead man leaps up on the bier and casts aside the shroud over him, revealing a handsome youth.*

Dead Man. How many things have you?

Bacchus (*indicating them*). These.

Dead Man. Will you give two drachmae for a tip? (*The porters in Athens charged outrageous prices for a trifling service.*)

\* Bacchus. (*Horried and indignant.*) By Jove—much less!

Dead Man. (*To the mourners.*) Resume the procession along the road. (*He drops back upon the bier, lifeless.*)

Bacchus. Wait, demon, to see if I can arrange with you. (*The procession starts.*)

Dead Man. (*Speaks from beneath his shroud thickly.*) If you won't throw down two drachmae, don't argue.

Bacchus. (*Taking out his purse.*) Take nine obols.

Dead Man. Rather let me live again up above! (*The procession resumes its progress.*)

Xanthias. How holy the damned rascal is! Won't he do penance? I'll go myself. (*Or, how loftily the devil talks. Won't he groan for it? I'll carry the things myself.*)

Bacchus. You're both useful and generous.

*Just then a boat emerges from the covert afforded by the growth of reeds along the banks of a tiny rivulet. The rivulet communicates with the lake beyond. The boat is paddled by an old man with long white whiskers. He is dressed in a tunic that comes to his knees, which are bare. This is Charon, the ferryman of the Styx, the river the dead must cross to get to Hades.*

Charon (*in a croaking accent*). Ho-ho! Get alongside.



*Xanthias.* (*Amazed at the sudden apparition*). What is this?

*Bacchus.* This? By Jove, this is the lake (*looking far off*) of which they spoke. (*He catches sight of Charon's vessel among the reeds.*) I see a boat.

*Xanthias.* By Neptune! This fellow here must be Charon.

*Bacchus.* How d'ye do, oh, Charon? How d'ye do, oh, Charon. How d'ye do, oh, Charon?

*Charon.* Who's to rest from wickedness and things? Who's bound for the field of Lethe (*bank of the river of forgetfulness*) where the donkey is sheared (*a proverbial way of saying that nothing was done*) or where the companions of Cerberus dwell, or to the crows or to Tanarus? (*Cerberus was the three-headed dog who guarded a portal of hell. "To the crows" meant to the devil or anywhere one pleased and Tanarus or Taenarus was a dark cavern leading to the infernal regions.*)

*Bacchus.* I.

*Charon.* Come in quickly.

*Bacchus.* How far will you go, do you think? To the crows?

*Xanthias.* (*aside*). Yes, by Jove, for your sake chiefly. Now get in.

*Bacchus.* Boy, here! (*He gets into the boat.*)

*Charon.* (*Indicating Xanthias*). A slave I

don't conduct, unless he fought in the sea battle for his meat. (*A slave who won his freedom by volunteering for a naval war could then eat the sacrificial meats like a freeman, according to Doctor Verrall. Doctor Merry says Charon has a grievance to air, for the unburied "carcasses" or "meats" of the drowned sailors represented lost fees to him.*)

*Xanthias.* By Jove—I happened to have sore eyes then!

*Charon.* Then you will run in a circle around the lake.

*Xanthias.* Where shall I stop?

*Charon.* Beside the stone of Auainos at the idling place. (*Or, according to Doctor Merry, at the withering stone. Auainos or Auaenus was a do-nothing.*)

*Bacchus.* Are you learning? (*He asks Xanthias whether he is becoming used to the lower world.*)

*Xanthias.* I'm learning a lot. What a luckless fiend I am! What devil did I meet when I went forth? (*That fiend brought him this ill luck.*)

*Xanthias* bundles the baggage together and gallops off on the back of the donkey.

## SCENE II

*The boat with Bacchus in it is well along in the lake. Charon is ferrying with a pole. The old ferryman seems suddenly to suspect that he has*

*left a passenger behind. He looks back with one hand over his eyes. Bacchus rocks the boat.*

*Charon (to Bacchus). Sit down to the oar! (The old man starts to pole the boat back to its starting place. He yells his next words.) If anyone else is still to embark, let him hurry up. (He turns to Bacchus.) What are you doing? (He discovers that the energies of Bacchus defeat his purpose to get the boat back.)*

*Bacchus. What am I doing? What else am I doing but sitting at the oar, where you ordered me?*

*Charon. Don't you know what you ought to do there, big belly?*

*Bacchus. There. (He flounders with the oars.)*

*Charon. Can't you throw your hands forward and spread yourself?*

*Bacchus. See! (Flounders again.)*

*Charon. Won't you stop fooling and go forward in the opposite direction steadily and willingly?*

*Bacchus. How can I—being inexperienced, unused to the sea, not at home in the Salaminian galley (the crack ship of the Athenian fleet)?*

*Charon. It's easy. You'll hear the most beautiful songs once you lay to your oars.*

*Bacchus. Whose?*

*Charon. The wonderful croaking swans.*

*Bacchus. Give me an idea of the tune.*

Charon. Oh-op-pop! Oh-op-pop!

*This whole scene is a burlesque of the training given to recruits for the navy who had to be summoned and taught in haste. As was inevitable in Athens, the training in rowing movements was accompanied by song and musical strains.)*

Frogs (invisible). Brek-kek-kek-kex! Ko-ax! Ko-ax! Brek-kek-kek-kek! Ko-ax! Ko-ax! Children of the lake-water springs, let us voice a united roar of songs, my well accented lay. Ko-ax! Ko-ax! This we shrieked around about the Nysaeon divinity Bacchus in Limnae (*where he was said to have been left a foundling, although others point out that here his festivals were held*) when with their holy pots the inebriated, wild-haired mob of people went about my boundaries. Brek-kek-kek-kex-ko-ax! Ko-ax. (*The mockery of the Euripidean chorus is obvious. The frogs intimate that when they were live frogs in the world they croaked for the revellers in Bacchic frenzy. The Bacchantes of Euripides was very famous then as it is now*).

Bacchus. I'm beginning to ache in the back-side. Oh, ko-ax! Ko-ax! (*Makes a gesture of anguish as the boat, propelled by Charon, attains the middle of the lake and the frog chorus becomes deafening.*) But I dare say it's no matter to you.

*Frogs.* Brek-kek-kek-kex! Ko-ax! Ko-ax!

*Bacchus.* To hell with you and the ko-ax!  
It's nothing but ko-ax!

*Frogs.* It's what it ought to be, you, who are doing so much. (*Bacchus is not helping to row the boat at all. The joke is all the greater to an Athenian because the god himself is here repudiating the chorus in his honor.*) The Muses of sweet song and horny-hoofed Pan, he the reed-voiced reveller, were infatuated with me. Apollo with his lute was enraptured too for the sake of the reed as well which, to go with the lyre, I nourish in watery wastes. (*A parody of a typical Euripidean chorus.*) Brek-kek-kek-kex! Ko-ax! Ko-ax!

*Bacchus.* I'm blistered. (*From rowing.*) How my backside has sweated here! Soon it will be lowered to echo "Brek-kek-kek-kex! Ko-ax! Ko-ax!" Oh, you breed of hymn-howlers, shut up!

*Frogs.* All the more, now, will we give voice! If once already on days bright with sunshine we leaped through marsh and meadow, rejoicing in tunes as we dive and plunge, ever and ever, or, as fleeing from the rain sent by Jove all wet in the watery depths we now here chant our dance song to the splashings or to the bubbles. Brek-kek-kek-kex! Ko-ax! Ko-ax!

*Bacchus.* Brek-kek-kek-kex! Ko-ax! Ko-ax!



*(He flourishes an oar in rage.)* I'm taking it from you.

*Frogs.* We'll suffer terribly then.

*Bacchus.* I'll suffer more terribly if I must row in time to your croaking.

*Frogs.* Brek-kek-kek-kex! Ko-ax! Ko-ax!

*Bacchus.* Croak on—it doesn't matter to me.

*Frogs.* Indeed, we will croak on as much as our gullets will let us the livelong day. Brek-kek-kek-kex! Ko-ax! Ko-ax!

*Bacchus.* Brek-kek-kek-kex! Ko-ax Ko-ax! You won't triumph over me in this.

*Frogs.* Nor you us—by no means.

*Bacchus.* Never! Never! I'll croak and I'll croak if I have to be croaking all day until I beat you at your own ko-ax. Brek-kek-kek-kex! Ko-ax! Ko-ax! *(There is a sudden silence.)* It was certain that sometime or other you'd have to stop your ko-ax! *(The boat fetches up unexpectedly on the opposite bank and Bacchus is nearly precipitated overboard.)*

*Charon.* Oh, stop! Stop! Balance yourself with the oar. Get off! Tip the boatman! *(Bacchus gets out.)*

*Bacchus.* Here are two obols. *(Charon takes the money and pushes the boat out into the lake.)* Xanthias! Xanthias! Where's Xanthias?

*Xanthias.* *(He is heard far off.)* Yo-ho!

*Bacchus.* Come here!

*A terrible din of packages mingles with the*

*braying of a donkey dashing upon the scene with Xanthias on its back.*

*Xanthias. Hail to you, oh, my master! (Darkness comes on quickly as Xanthias, to avoid falling, catches the donkey by the tail.)*

### SCENE III

*The infernal regions. The scene represents a moonlit garden. The palace of Pluto looms mistily through the trees. Ghostly statues line a spectral path leading over a vague hill.*

*Bacchus. What's here?*

*Xanthias. Shadow and slush.*

*Bacchus. Have you seen anywhere yet those slayers of their fathers and those perjurers about whom he told us?*

*Xanthias. Did you?*

*Bacchus. By Neptune, I did that and now I see more. (Looks at the audience.) Now (turning to Xanthias) what are we to do?*

*Xanthias. Forward is the best way for us both since this is the place where the terrible wild beasts are, according to him (Hercules).*

*Bacchus. How he'll regret this! We've been tricked. So that I might be terrified, he said what he did. He was aware that I am pugnacious, loving glory. There is never a one quite so jealous as Hercules. I'd be glad to encounter a worthy foeman and get into a fight with him on this road. (He peers nervously through the shadows, trembling.)*

*Xanthias.* (*Starting.*) By Jove—I hear a sound!

*Bacchus.* Where is it? Where?

*Xanthias.* Just behind!

*Bacchus.* Back you go!

*Xanthias.* But it's ahead!

*Bacchus.* Ahead you go!

*Xanthias.* But now I see—by Jove!—a huge beast.

*Bacchus.* What kind?

*Xanthias.* Terrible! At any rate it turns into everything. Now it's an ox, again a mule, and it is even a beautiful, most beautiful woman or other.

*Bacchus.* Where is she? Lead me to her.

*Xanthias.* It isn't a woman any more but a dog.

*Bacchus.* Empusa it must be then. (*Empusa was a ghostly creature in the suite of Hecate and she haunted solitudes after dark.*)

*Xanthias.* With flame at any rate her whole face is now gleaming.

*Bacchus.* Her leg is brazen.

*Xanthias.* (*Sniffing the air.*) One of them is cow dung. (*Sniffs the air again.*) No doubt of it.

*Bacchus* (*trembling*). Which way am I to turn?

*Xanthias* (*trembling*). And where am I to go?

*Bacchus* (*rushing to the front of the scene and signaling to the priest of Bacchus, who sat conspicuously among the audience.*) Sacred

man, protect me, so that I may drink with you later on. (*The high priest of Bacchus had a wine party after the play.*)

Xanthias. We're lost, oh, sovereign Hercules!

Bacchus. Oh, man, don't call me, I beg, and don't even call my name. (*Bacchus has assumed the part Hercules to mislead the shades below and still in his own true character as Bacchus he is an object of contempt in Hades because of his feminine timidity.*)

Xanthias. Bacchus, then.

Bacchus. That's still worse than the other.

Xanthias. Go where you are going. (*To Hell.*) Here, here, master!

Bacchus. What is it?

Xanthias. Be bold—we've done everything properly. It's possible for us, to say, like Hegelochus, that "from the waves again I see a weasel." (*The actor Hegelochus mispronounced the word "calm" until it sounded exactly like "weasel" in Greek, thus making ridiculous a sublime scene in Euripidean tragedy.*) The Empusa is gone.

Bacchus. Make oath to that.

Xanthias. By Jove!

Bacchus. Swear to it again.

Xanthias. By Jove!

Bacchus. Swear yet again.

Xanthias. By Jove!

Bacchus. Miserable me—how I paled when looking upon her!

*Xanthias.* And he (*indicating the high priest of Bacchus in the audience*) turned even redder than yourself from fear.

*Bacchus.* Oh me—whence have these evils come to overwhelm me? Which of the gods shall I charge with destroying me? Is it the breath of the god Jove or the foot of time? (*These are burlesques of phrases in the tragedies of Euripides.*)

*Xanthias* (*starting*). What's this?

*Bacchus.* What is it?

*Xanthias.* Didn't you hear anything?

*Bacchus.* What?

*Xanthias.* The sound of flutes.

*Bacchus.* That I did. (*Flutes are heard near by.*) And I see torches, a most spiritualized breath of air fanning me, too. Let's draw aside and lie down and listen. (*They retire from the path to a clump of bushes as the sound of flutes and singing and the flashes of torch light draw ever nearer.*)

The scene that now ensues represents the procession in celebration of the Eleusinian mysteries, one of the most sacred processional ceremonies in the whole ancient world. The real chorus now makes itself heard just off the scene, being made up of the persons who had already been initiated into the Eleusinian mysteries. They were the so-called initiates. They will be cited as the Chorus.



*Chorus.* Iacchus! Oh, Iacchus! Iacchus, oh, Iacchus! (*A name for Bacchus.*)

*Xanthias.* There they are, master—the initiates—here—they're exercising, the people of whom we were told. They're singing Iacchus whom Diagoras (*a famed atheist*) insults.

*Bacchus.* So it seems to me. Let us now be quiet for that would be best. We can learn everything exactly then.

*Chorus* (*it emerges from the gloomy recesses of a shadowy grove, waving torches and dancing*). Iacchus, oh Iacchus, highly honored by those who here dwell forever, come dancing up this meadow, holily gotten up for the revel, waving about your brow the richly fruited garland of myrtle. Tap, tap, tap the ground with foot that is fearless for the sake of the glad game so fired with frolic by the incense-inspired initiates. (*A bold and brilliant burlesque of a tragic chorus. Doctor Merry translates: "Keeping time with fearless foot to the reckless sportive rite that hath the fullest share of festive joy, the sacred dance kept holy for the hallowed Mystae." Hickie renders: "with bold feet treading a measure among the pious Mystae, possessing the largest share of the graces, holy and sacred, the unrestrained, mirth-loving act of worship." The difficulty is to give the effect of the genius displayed by Aristophanes in making fun of Greek tragedy*

*and at the same time parodying the conspicuous aspects of the life around him.)*

*Xanthias.* Oh, venerable, well-revered daughter of Demeter, what a sweet scent of cooked ham is wafted here!

*Bacchus.* Will you keep quiet if only for the sake of getting some sausage!

*Chorus.* Flourish the fiery torches in your hands, for you come waving them, too, Iacchus, oh Iacchus! (*In such processions Bacchus was deemed present in spirit if not in fact.*) Light-bearing star of the nightly revels, the meadow is gleaming afire. Even the limbs of the aged men are lightly liting. They doff their dreariness and the weight of years for the sake of the sacred songs and ceremonies. You, with your torch of flame go on in front of us and lead to the flowery olive in the meadow of the dance, where blessed youth revels, furious and free. Let him speak well and give due honor to our dances who is unversed in these choruses or is not pure in heart.

*The procession has now approached close to the hiding place of Bacchus and Xanthias. Xanthias peeps over a bush and is dragged down by Bacchus.*

He who has neither danced in nor beheld the orgies of the noble Muses nor gone through the Bacchic frenzies of bull-mawed Cratinus (*a comic poet*) or laughed at clownish jokes

made in mockery of our manners, or repelled the ranks of the standing foe at the front, or is not good tempered among the citizens or courteous to the public but exploits it and makes it angry for the sake of his personal profit or who when the city is in trouble sells his political power to corruptionists, or sells out a garrison or a ship of war as a traitor to his country or trades with the enemy at Aegina, or in the fashion of Thorycion (*a rapacious tax collector*), sent rowers supplies and cloth for sails as well as tar to Epidaurus—

*The procession in its entirety is now on the scene. The ragamuffins are wild in their horseplay. Some of the revellers take off their garlands and throw them at one another. Xanthias shows a disposition to snatch at the fruits and meats borne on great dishes past his hiding place but he is held down by Bacchus.*

—or he who plausibly coaxes a fellow to put money to buy ships for the foe or leaves his filth on the images of Hecate while joining in the songs of the chorus here or who filches away their fees from the poets while he is an orator of the day for the reason that he has been made fun of in the rites of Bacchus, these, all of them I bid again and again and yet a third time to make way for this dancing procession of the initiated, to betake himself off from the path of this parade of the Mystae (*or, mystic choir*).

*(Xanthias snatches at a lump of roast pork and gobbles it down before Bacchus can prevent him.)*

But you who are fit to eat at this feast of ours, raise your voices in our nightly nonsense. *(A din of flutes.)*

Proceed now every one to the depths of the meadowy, flowery green. Look about you for a place to leap and to dance and to play in. We've had something to eat. So come along, raise your voices in honor of the saving divinity *(the queen of hell)* of these regions, she who promises to preserve our native land whether Thorycion likes it or not.

*(The procession now threatens to break up in a riot and Xanthias, forgetting that these are ghosts, rushes among them only to be dragged back once more by Bacchus.)*

Now we sing another hymn to the fruit-bearing queen, Ceres the divine, Ceres, sovereign of holy howlings, be with us now and save the dance in your honor. *(Keep it from breaking up in a riot.)*

Let me dance and play in safety all the day.

*(Whips are produced by some clowns in the procession who proceed to beat old men over the head.)*

Many a clownish thing let me say and many a thing solemn as well, worthy of utterance at your banquet and when I have triumphed in

the competition to see which is the greatest fool, give me a prize.

*(All revel, kicking up their heels, men, women and youths and girls in a frenzied orgy which Xanthias vainly tries to join because they are all ghosts.)*

And now let us summon with yell the beautiful god himself here, our lord in these revels.

Oh, Iacchus, much revered, the sweet music of the feast is of your composition (*din of kettledrums*) join our parade at this point to the goddess and prove how far you can march without getting weary once.

Iacchus, lover of the dance, comes to my side, escort me! Just see the state I am in. Favor me with friendly face. My underwear even is torn to shreds. It's the way of these affairs. True to your example, footwear is in tatters and garments are in rags. Clothes for these occasions do not cost much. *(Young women are seen with next to nothing on because their tunics have been torn to ribbons.)*

Hoho! I chanced to look aside just now. I beheld the breasts of a sweet and lovely girl, oh, very pretty, as they were revealed through a tear in her clothes.

Iacchus, lover of the dance, be at my side.

*The corruption of the text in places and the difficulty of determining just what features of the procession—a scandalous parade at times—are being satirized, make it next to impossible*

*to translate this chorus exactly. The words are spoken first by one reveller and then another, the costume of the singer being likewise a burlesque of some famous personage in hell or above it in heaven or between the two in the city of Athens.*

*Bacchus (lurking in his place of concealment.) I'm very eager to follow her, somehow (indicating the pretty girl in the torn dress) and to dance and play with her.*

*Xanthias. So am I! (He starts up as if he would do so and is dragged down by Bacchus.)*

*Chorus. Would you have us join in universal ridicules of Archedemus? (A powerful politician) When he was seven years old he was without country or countrymen but now he is a public character and sits in judgment upon the dead above. (In Hell those on earth are among the dead. The politician referred to is accused of having decided which among the corpses after a naval battle should receive rites of sepulchre.) He, I hear, is chief rogue up there. Cleisthenes, I am told, has plucked the hair from his backside and tears his cheeks with grief. (This notorious character was addicted to unnatural vices.) He went down upon hands and knees to bemoan and to mourn Sebinus of the passion burned out. Nor need I doubt when they say Callias also, whose father is Hippobinus, (Callias was a disreputable youth who studied under Socrates) was in*



the fight upon the water where he wore a woman's clothes.

*Bacchus springs forth from his place of concealment, closely followed by Xanthias.*

*Bacchus.* Is there anyone here who can tell us where Pluto lives (*Pluto being god of hell*)? We are two strangers just arrived here.

*Chorus.* (*The leader of the procession speaks.*) Oh, don't go far from here and don't ask me again for you have reached his very door.

*Bacchus.* Take the things up again, boy! (*This to Xanthias.*)

*Xanthias.* What is talk about baggage but a repetition of Corinthian Jove? (*Any tiresome repetition was called a "Corinthian Jove" because the Corinthians were always insisting that Jove was a Corinthian.*)

*Chorus.* (*The leader speaks.*) Go up to the sacred circle of the goddess (*her enclosure*) and be gay as you wend your way through her garden of flowers since you are permitted to be present at a feast so divine!

*Bacchus.* I will go among the maidens and the married women where they hold nightly revel for the goddess—I, bearing the holy falchion. (*Sacred torch*).

*Chorus.* Now we will go forward to the blooming meadows where the many roses are in flower as our fashion is, gambolling in the most beautiful of dances led by the potent fates together. To us alone the sun and the holy day

are delightful for we have been initiated into the mysteries and we are polite to both citizens and to foreigners.

*The procession resumes its march in a disorderly rout, accompanied by a din of kettle-drums, a sputtering of torches, a sound of many lutes and the medley of singing girls and youths. Xanthias rushes to the side of the girl whose tunic is in ribbons but he is kicked away by Bacchus, who dances off the stage with her. Xanthias, having fallen down, at last picks himself up and limps painfully after the procession.*

#### SCENE IV

*A remoter portion of the same spectral grove. The infernal palace looms through the shadows. There is a shout of joy and Bacchus bounds upon the scene. He looks uneasily at the palace and then turns as Xanthias hobbles up.*

**Bacchus.** Say, how shall I knock at the door? In what fashion? How do those who are native here knock?

**Xanthias.** Don't delay. Rather have a try at the door. Aren't you to look and to act like Hercules?

**Bacchus.** Boy! Boy!

**Aeacus (within).** Who is that?

**Bacchus.** Hercules the giant!

*Aeacus emerges. He is a tall and handsome man in the prime of life, wearing a long robe belted at the waist. From the belt hangs a bunch of keys. He carries a sceptre. Aeacus*

was one of the three judges in Hades but he had been king in Aegina and renowned for his justice. Jove was his father and his mother was a minor divinity—Aegina or perhaps Europa.

**Aeacus.** Oh, vile, impenitent and brazen brute! You execrable, wholly hateful and most Abominable devil! You it was that dragged out our dog Cerberus, choking him in your grasp as you ran off with the poor beast just when I had charge of him! Now you're caught in the toils. In just that fashion, the black stone of the Styx, black to its centre, and the gory peak of Acheron will clutch you between them, to say nothing of the fleet-running dogs of Cocytus and the hundred-headed tarantula, which will tear your bowels and entrails into fragments. The Tartesian lamprey will set your lungs afire. Your kidneys, all bloody from the wounds in your entrail's, will be fed to the Tithrasian Gorgons (*scolds living in an Athenian slum*) whom I will set upon you with a quick kick.

*Aeacus slams the door of his temple behind him, disappearing from view. His bombastic speech is a burlesque of the manner of the tragic poets on the stage. To emphasize the satire, Bacchus and Xanthias fall back from the steps of the palace in terror.*

**Xanthias.** Clown! Get up before they see you.

**Bacchus.** I'm ready to swoon. Apply a sponge to my heart.

*Xanthias.* See—here it is.

*Bacchus.* Apply it. (*Puts up his nether extremity.*)

*Xanthias.* Gods of gold! Is that where your heart is. (*Kicks the hind quarters of Bacchus.*)

*Bacchus.* I was so afraid that it dropped down below my belly.

*Xanthias.* Oh, you direst of divinities and of men!

*Bacchus.* I? How am I dire from demanding a sponge—something that would have occurred to no man.

*Xanthias.* What would he have thought of?

*Bacchus.* He would have wallowed in his filth if he were cowardly but I arose and wiped myself.

*Xanthias.* Manly—oh, Neptune!

*Bacchus.* I agree—by Jove! But weren't you afraid of the fury of his language and those menaces?

*Xanthias.* No—I didn't even consider them—by Jove.

*Bacchus.* Get out! Since you're so audacious and so manly, you become myself by taking this club and the lion's hide—since you're so fearless of guts. I'll be you and the porter into the bargain.

*Xanthias.* Hand those things over—quickly! it is no matter for persuasion. Look upon the Herculean *Xanthias* whether I am timid

and with a disposition like yours. (*He puts on the lion skin and takes the club.*)

*Bacchus.* By Jove, you're certainly not the slave of Melite (*where Hercules had a temple. The jest is at the expense of a notorious rake, Callias, who hailed from Melite and dressed like Hercules.*) Now, I shall have to lift these bundles.

*The disguises are no sooner assumed than a glowing young girl bounds in. She wears a short tunic and the sandals of a servant, being one of the maids of Proserpine, queen of Hades. The maid claps her hands with joy at sight of Xanthias in the garb of a Hercules. She passes on the steps of the shadowy palace.*

*Maid.* Oh, you have come, beloved Hercules! Come right inside. The moment the goddess herself learned that you were arrived she put bread into the oven, she started a fire beneath two or three pots of pea's mush, set a whole ox upon the glowing coals and cooked cheese cakes and buns. But come in!

*Xanthias.* Magnificent, but no, thanks!

*Maid.* By Apollo, I will not hear of your turning around and going back again since the birds have been brought to a boil for you and candies set simmering and the sweetest wines blended deliciously. Come inside with me.

*Xanthias.* All very fine!

*Maid.* You're mad! I won't let you go. In fact there is a girl for you inside who plays

upon the lute and is most beautiful, to say nothing of two or three dancing women.

*Xanthias.* What did you say? Dancing women?

*Maid.* Not so old either and all dolled up fresh. But come in, since the cook has already begun to lift out the portions of fish and the table is being set.

*Xanthias.* Go then. Say first of all to those dancing women who are inside that I myself am coming in. Oh, boy (*to Bacchus*), follow me and bring along the baggage.

*The maid claps her hands with delight and disappears within.*

*Bacchus.* Hold up! Wait a minute! You're not taking all this seriously just because for the sake of a jest I tricked you out as Hercules? Don't persist in making a fool of yourself, Xanthias, but when you have gotten the baggage up again, carry it.

*Xanthias.* What is it now? You don't surely intend to deprive me of what you gave me yourself?

*Bacchus.* I don't intend to do it quickly for I am already doing it. Drop the hide!

*Xanthias.* I swear to this myself and I also call the gods to witness—

*Bacchus.* What gods? Does it not seem even to yourself a thing insane and idle that although you are only a slave and a mortal you shall be the son of Alcmena (*Hercules*)?

*Xanthias.* It doesn't matter to me. All right. Take them. Perhaps some day or other you



will yet be in need of me if some god or other decrees it.

*Chorus. (becoming suddenly visible amid a glare of torches.)* This is proper in a man of mind and wisdom who has sailed on many a voyage, always to roll to the solid side where the wall is strongly built rather than stand like a painted statue sticking to one thing. To turn around and make for the softest berth would be true to the character of a man like Thera-menés. (*He was the Mr. Facing-both-Ways of Athenian politics.*)

*Bacchus (who has resumed the garb of Hercules.)* I say, how absurd it must have seemed if Xanthias, a serf, dived into the depths of Milesian (*very fine wool*) bed spreads as he made love to a dancing woman or roared for a slop jar while I only looked on and did other things until he took it into his head to pound me with his clenched fist, the rascal, and knock my teeth out of my mouth!

*Bacchus is still flourishing his fist at the chorus to say this when two landladies of hotels in Hades rush up and look Bacchus over suspiciously. One of them fails obviously to recognize Bacchus and retires.*

*Landlady. Plathane, Plathane, come back here!* This rascal here is he who came into our hotel once and devoured our whole sixteen loaves.

*Plathane (she is a buxom female, unlike her companion landlady, who is tall and thin. The*

*buxom one comes slowly back and stares at Bacchus.)* By Jove—that is indeed he!

*Xanthias.* There's trouble for somebody.

*Landlady.* And twenty portions of stew besides at less than an obol apiece.

*Xanthias.* Somebody will pay for it.

*Plathane.* And the many helpings of garlic.

*Bacchus.* Woman, you're raving and you don't know what you say.

*Plathane.* Did you expect that because you've got buskins I wouldn't recognize you still? (*She thinks he has tried to disguise himself because the buskins or loose boots were not in keeping with the bludgeon and the lion hide of Hercules.*) And oh—I forgot to speak of the great lot of preserved fish!

*Landlady.* No, by Jove, nor the yellow cheese, poor thing, which this man gulped down as well as the strainers.

*Plathane.* And then when I asked for money, he stared fiercely at me and "mooed" like a cow!

*Xanthias.* That's his performance everywhere. Those are his manners all over.

*Plathane.* And he flourished a sword as if he had gone mad.

*Landlady.* Poor woman—by Jove!

*Plathane.* When we two in our fright flew up a ladder he dashed off in a rush taking our rugs as well.

*Xanthias.* That too is just the way this fellow acts always. Something will have to be done.

*Landlady (Addressing the chorus.)* Go now and summon my protector Cleon. (*In Hades he is still a politician.*)

*Planathe (To a clown in the chorus.)* And you, if you should see him, call Hyperbolus for me so that he may knock this fellow (Bacchus) down. (*Hyperbolus was in Hades a pothouse politician as he had been on earth.*)

*Landlady.* Oh, vile gullet (*to Bacchus*), how delightful it would be to break your jaw with a stone for with those jaws of yours you devoured my provender for me!

*Planathe.* I could throw you into the pit (*jail*).

*Landlady.* I could cut out that throat of yours with a blade I'd grabbed for the purpose, you bolter of tripe! But I'm going right straight to Cleon who'll have him arrested this very day and make him sweat for this. (*She retires flourishing her fists, followed by Planthane.*)

*Bacchus.* Most direly may I die if I don't love Xanthias!

*Xanthias.* I appreciate, I understand your state of mind. Stop, stop talking. I won't be turned into Hercules again.

*Bacchus.* Don't—don't, oh, little Xanthias! (*He tries to put a hand upon the mouth of Xanthias to keep him from refusing.*)

*Xanthias.* The son of Alcmena—how could I be that who am a slave and at the same time a mortal?

*Bacchus.* I know, I understand why you're vexed and that you do right to be so. Even if you were to strike me I wouldn't say a word against you! Yet if ever in time to come I take them from you (*indicating the hide and the bludgeon*) may I myself, altogether with my wife and my children be destroyed utterly together with the near-sighted *Archedemus*. (*The jest here is that Archedemus injured his eyes through his devotion to Bacchus or as we now say through his fondness for drink.*)

*Xanthias.* I take your word and will accept these things besides. (*He assumes bludgeon and hide.*)

*Chorus.* Now your task is, since you have taken up the attire you had on in the beginning, to resume your youth and its drastic impulses and to contemplate once more the doing of dire things, remembering the god you now resemble. But if you're caught babbling imbecilities or shall vociferate in timid accents again you'll be driven by sheer compulsion to be porter with the luggage.

*Xanthias.* Not badly, fellows, you advise me but I myself happen to be thinking of these very things. Of course I realize that if he can benefit by it at all he'll take these bits of baggage away from me again. However I'll show myself courageous and formidable in appearance. It looks as if I ought to for I hear the door and no ordinary sound. (*The front*

door of an ancient Greek house opened outwards and it was deemed considerate to make a noise before opening it lest anybody outside be struck by it.)

*The noise at the door is preliminary to the re-appearance of Aeacus. He is attended by slaves.*

*Aeacus.* All of you together be quick and tie this dog thief up so that he may be taken to court. Hurry up! (*He indicates Xanthias in the disguise.*)

*Bacchus.* There'll be trouble here for somebody.

*Xanthias.* Go to the crows. Will you keep away?

*Aeacus.* So—you're putting up a fight? (*He summons more men from within.*) Ho, Ditylas and ho, Skeblyas and ho, Pardocas, come on here and fight with this one.

*A scrimmage ensues in which Xanthias gets the best of it.*

*Bacchus.* Isn't this fierce? He beats people after he has stolen their property.

*Aeacus.* It's too much.

*Bacchus.* Terrible—awful!

*Xanthias.* And indeed by Jove if ever before I visited here I hope I may die, or if ever I stole any of your things worth so much as a hair! And for you I'll do a thing altogether generous. Punish this boy of mine here when you've seized him and if ever you catch me doing what's not right take me away and kill me.

*Aeacus.* And how am I to do the punishing (or administer the torture)?

*Xanthias.* In every way. Bind him to a step ladder. Hang him. Lash him with a whip. Skin him alive. Stretch out his limbs. Pour acid down his nose. Lay him out on marble (*or*, brick him up). Do anything else except that you mustn't wallop him with an onion shoot or a young onion.

*Aeacus.* What you say is right. And if I lame this lad of yours beating him, there'll be money coming to you.

*Xanthias.* Nothing to me. That's how you may rack him when you've led him off.

*Aeacus.* No—here so that he may speak under your eyes. (*To Bacchus*). Put that baggage down quickly and see to it that when you speak here it's nothing mendacious.

*Bacchus.* I warn all not to torture me, for I'm an immortal. If you do, blame yourself for the consequences.

*Aeacus (to Xanthias).* What do you say to that?

*Bacchus (interrupting).* An immortal—that's what I say I am, Bacchus, son of Jove. This one here (*indicates Xanthias*) is the slave.

*Aeacus (to Xanthias again).* You hear that?

*Xanthias.* I'll talk too. He's all the more deserving of the lash. Since he's a god anyhow, he won't feel it.

*Bacchus.* Why, then, since you say you're a god, why are you not beaten too just as many lashes as are given to me?

*Xanthias.* Fair, that suggestion! Which-



ever of us two (*to Aeacus, indicating Bacchus*) you detect wincing first (*or howling first*) or showing signs of punishment, deem him no deity.

*Aeacus.* It can not be but that you are a perfect gentleman. You insist upon doing the right thing. Take off your clothes.

*Xanthias.* And how will you torture the two of us impartially?

*Aeacus.* Simply—one lash at a time to each.

*Xanthias.* You speak fairly.

*Aeacus.* See! (*Xanthias is stripped and ready*).

*Xanthias.* (*In an attitude to take the lash*).

Now watch to see whether I wince.

*Aeacus (strikes).* I've already struck you.

*Xanthias.* Never, by Jove—or it doesn't seem so to me.

*Aeacus.* Nor does it seem so to me either. But I'll go to him now and lash him (*strikes Bacchus*). I hit him.

*Bacchus.* When?

*Aeacus* I just hit you.

*Bacchus.* How comes it that I didn't sneeze?

*Aeacus.* I don't know, but now this one I'll try once more (*indicating Xanthias*).

*Xanthias.* And won't you be quick about it? (*Aeacus strikes*). Tut-tut-tut-tut!

*Aeacus.* Why do you say tut-tut-tut-tut-tut? Didn't it hurt?

*Xanthias.* Not at all, by Jove! I was wondering when the festival in honor of Hercules would take place among the Diomeians. (*Dio-*

*mus, a friend of Hercules, gave his name to the Diomeians, who had built a famous temple to the giant and hero.)*

*Aeacus.* A holy man! I'll be back again.  
(*Crosses over to Bacchus and gives him a lash.*)

*Bacchus.* Phew! Phew!

*Aeacus.* What is it?

*Bacchus.* Men on horseback—I see them.

*Aeacus.* But why do you weep?

*Bacchus.* Onions—I smell them.

*Aeacus (mockingly).* You don't notice it?  
(*The lash.*)

*Bacchus.* It doesn't matter to me.

*Aeacus.* It's now time to go to the other one.  
(*Lashes Xanthias.*)

*Xanthias.* Ah, me!

*Aeacus.* What is it?

*Xanthias.* A thorn—take it out. (*Holds up his foot.*)

*Aeacus.* What does the thing amount to? I must go again back to the other one. (*Lashes Bacchus.*)

*Bacchus.* Oh, Apollo, you who dwell at Delos or at Pytho!

*Xanthias (to Aeacus).* It hurt him—didn't you hear?

*Bacchus.* Not me! It was a couple of lines by Hipponax I was recalling.

*Xanthias (to Aeacus).* You're not doing anything—hit him in the thighs.

*Æacus.* Right, by Jove! (To *Bacchus*.)  
Hold out your belly.

*Bacchus.* Neptune!

*Xanthias.* Somebody got hurt.

*Bacchus.* He who holds the cape of Ægeus (or the *Ægean coast line*) or the blue brine far below.

*Æacus.* Not yet, by Ceres, am I able to decide which of you two is a divinity. But go inside. My master will himself recognize you or Proserpine will, for they are both divine.

*Bacchus.* Right you are. That's what I wanted you to do in the first place before receiving these lashes.

*He rushes madly up the steps into the palace. Xanthias rushes after him. Æacus looks in bewilderment at the baggage scattered upon the grass and then retires within the palace with his retinue. There is a din of kettledrums followed by shouting and wild laughter.*

*Chorus* (a ghost dance begins and first one and then another capering clown speaks). Patroness of the holy dances, come forward and delight in my lays and at the same time look at the big crowd around about where the arts and the wisdoms sit. They are worthier of honor than Cleophon (a cheap musician and pothouse politician of the town) from whose gibbering lips a Thracian swallow scolds about an alien bud. (The fellow had a barbarian sweetheart.) It mourns in the manner of the

nightingale that he's doomed in spite of the split in the jury. (*He was on trial for a peccadillo.*)

The holy dance should express and teach what is good for the country.

In the first place it does seem to me that the city should be of some use to the citizens and take away their terrible burdens.

If anybody went wrong from being humbugged by Phrynicus (*an insurgent commander who got up a revolution*) why then I say those who got mixed up in his doings ought to be allowed to confess their guilt and be forgiven their previous indiscretions. (*The speaker of these lines shows by his dress that he was one of the persons involved.*)

There ought not to be anybody in town who is not held in honor. (*Spoken by a jail bird.*)

It's a disgrace that a fellow who has fought but a single sea fight should at once be put on a level with a veteran of Plataea and instead of a slave be a master. (*Said by a veteran of the war then raging.*)

Well, I don't say that's wrong. In fact, I am pleased by it. (*He fought one sea fight only.*) It's the only sensible thing that's been done yet.

Moreover, it's only right that you overlook this disqualification, seeing that their fathers fought in many a sea fight even if they be guilty of having shed their blood in only one.

Now lay aside your wrath, you who are so wise by disposition, and willingly receive as

## THE FROGS

members of our family and as fellow citizens, all who are willing to fight at sea with us.

If we are to give ourselves airs on this account (*because we have fought more than once at sea*) and boast too vainly of this town, and its naval prowess, why then next we are buffeted by the crests of the waves we shall once again and that in our last days appear to be raving mad. (*All this is a burlesque of a war debate in the popular assembly and the ghosts who say these things are those of notorious politicians.*)

If I'm any judge of the life or the morals of a man, he does not amount to much, this ape who is now giving us all such trouble, this Cligenes the tiny, the worst bath rubber that ever was among the class of men who use lye made of counterfeit soda and dirt from Simolus and call it soap, won't last long (*This grievance is voiced by a ghost of a fop who prinked and bepowdered himself at the baths.*)

He's well aware of it and still he's not peacefully disposed. (*This may mean that the vile bathman wants the war to go on but it is likelier that he was impudent to his customers.*)

Let's hope he won't be stripped naked some day when he's drunk and out without a stick.

Many a time it has seemed to me that the city thinks just about the same of its citizens whether they be good or bad and it seems to have a similar view regarding the money, at least when we consider the difference between

the old coinage and the new. We don't find in circulation the unadulterated coin that is the best minted money on earth and so received by both foreigners and the native born Greeks for they shove upon us the copper tokens turned out a day or two ago in the meanest manner. (*Spoken by a merchant.*)

Those of our citizens whom we know to be well born and wise men and just and fine looking and virtuous and well disciplined in athletics and dances and music are the very ones we drive out of town. (*Plaint of a hundred-per-cent Athenian of respectable old family.*)

We make use in every branch of activity only of bold alien barbarians and slaves who are the last to come to town and the newest of immigrants, dead beats who were begotten by thieves to whom the town until lately would not have entrusted a dose of medicine. (*Grievance of a native born who can not get a job.*)

Well, even at this late day, you fools, change your ways. Hire the right people. Employ once more the employable.

People who fail are deemed to have deserved defeat.

If you suffer, seem, at any rate, to be suffering among the wise, by hanging from a beam that will bear your weight.

*Din of kettledrums. All dance around. Loud yells.*



## SCENE V

*The light of Hades plays in varied hues over the pillars and portico of the palace of the King and the Queen of Hades. Aeacus is observed stealing down the great flight of front steps as if he wished to escape detection. Xanthias steals after him. The chorus or rather the initiated who comprise it, are seen stealing one by one in the sepulchral light towards an open space as if they wished to escape detection by Aeacus and Xanthias.*

**Aeacus.** By Jove, who saves us, a generous soul is that master of yours!

**Xanthias.** Why shouldn't he be a perfect gentleman? All he can do is get drunk and make love.

**Aeacus.** For he did not pummel you when you were caught red-handed in masquerading as the master when you are but the slave.

**Xanthias.** He'd have repented it.

**Aeacus.** It's a menial's trick you played in the open—a thing I delight in.

**Xanthias.** Delight in? I beg your pardon.

**Aeacus.** I seem all the more initiated (*into the mysterious of Eleusis*) when I heap objur-gations in secret upon my master.

**Xanthias.** How about mumbling when you have received many lashes and get out into the fresh air?

**Aeacus.** That I take pleasure in, too.

*Xanthias.* And in doing a lot of things?  
(*Minding other people's business.*)

*Aeacus.* By Jove, I know nothing so pleasant!

*Xanthias.* Patriarchal Jove! And what about listening on the sly to the conversation of your masters? (*Talk heard within the palace. Both crouch.*)

*Aeacus.* I'm more than crazy to do it.

*Xanthias.* Oh, Phoebus Apollo! Put your right hand in mine! And give us a kiss and kiss for kiss. And let me know for the sake of Jove, who is a brother to us both in being lashed and beaten himself (*Jove was a hen-pecked husband*) what's this hullabaloo and uproar and vilification going on within? (*Pandemonium inside.*)

*Aeacus.* It's Aeschylus against Euripides.  
(*The great playwright of the old school against the great playwright of the new school.*)

*Xanthias.* Oho!

*Aeacus.* A thing, a big thing, has been doing something big among the dead and there's a great upheaval.

*Xanthias.* From what?

*Aeacus.* The law here is as regards the arts, the big ones and the fine ones, that whoever is the best in each among his fellow workers shall have free table board at the place of public entertainment and sit next to Pluto himself. (*This burlesques Athenian practice.*)

*Xanthias.* I see.

*Aeacus.* Unless there comes along an artist superior to the other, who, in that event, must give way to the other. (*Pandemonium within.*)

*Xanthias.* But why has this set Aeschylus going?

*Aeacus.* He sat on the throne of tragedy as being the greatest in that art.

*Xanthias.* Whose is it now?

*Aeacus.* When Euripides came down here, he proceeded to exhibit to the highwayman, and the pickpockets and the burglars and the murderers of their parents, of whom Hades is full. When they heard his dialogues and his gags and his quips, they went wild over them and pronounced him the most brilliant. Then he was puffed up and made a move towards the throne upon which sat Aeschylus.

*Xanthias.* Wasn't he beaten back?

*Aeacus.* By Jove! The crowd raised an uproar for a competition to decide which in their art is the best.

*Xanthias.* The crowd of criminals?

*Aeacus.* They roared to Heaven, by Jove!

*Xanthias.* With Aeschylus were there not others who fought for him?

*Aeacus.* Few are the meritorious here, as there. (*Indicates the audience.*)

*Xanthias.* But what is Pluto doing in the way of preparations?

*Aeacus.* Getting up a competition to have a test and inquiry on the subject of their art.

**Xanthias.** How comes it that Socrates did not set up a claim for the throne?

**Aeacus.** By Jove, that fellow didn't! But he kissed Aeschylus when he came down and grasped his right hand and he (*Aeschylus*) yielded room to him on the throne. Now he means, according to Clidemides (*a noted actor*), to have a place on that throne. If Aeschylus remains on it, he will let it go at that. Otherwise, he says he will contest the matter of skill with Euripides.

**Xanthias.** The thing will come off, then?

**Aeacus.** By Jove, sooner or later! Then there will be the devil to pay, right here! Literary ability will be determined by weight.

**Xanthias.** What's that? Is tragedy to be weighed on the scales like mutton?

**Aeacus.** And they will fetch straight-edged wood and two-foot rules to measure lines of poetry, as well as oblong frames.

**Xanthias.** Will there be hods and mortar? (*The text is disputed here.*)

**Aeacus.** And four squares and wedges. Euripides says he will weigh the tragedies by the word.

**Xanthias.** I suppose Aeschylus dislikes all this.

**Aeacus.** He looked grim, certainly, and bent his head.

**Xanthias.** And who's the judge of these things?

**Aeacus.** That was hard in view of the lack of wise men. Aeschylus wouldn't put up with Athenians.

**Xanthias.** Perhaps he rated most of them as burglars. (*Pandemonium within.*)

**Aeacus.** All others he deemed dunces in judgment upon the genius of poets. Then it was they turned to your master as one who was versed in the art. But let us go inside. Whenever our masters get heated in argument, there are scoldings for us. (*The voices get angrier within as Aeacus steals up the steps, followed cautiously by Xanthias.*)

**Chorus.** Dire rage will thunder even more within those portals when he (*Aeschylus*) beholds his sharp worded rival in their art pointing his fangs. (*The pandemonium within punctuates the remarks of the people in the chorus.*)

Then in awful agony he will distort his eyes.

What a series of skirmishes between arrays of words crested with horse hair will then set verbal lances tilting! (*The style is a mockery of that of Aeschylus.*)

There will ensue the crash of turning and twisting splinters and the polishing of style, for the man must beat back the cavorting lucubrations of the poet inspired. (*Making fun of one who loved big words.*)

The involutions of his horrific hirsute superabundance will be erectly terrifying in aspect as he writhes the beetling brows he frowns with and emits concatenation of phrases fastened by means of bolts yet pried off from their context by himself as planks are ripped

up from ships by windy breaths. (*The imitation of the compound-word style of Aeschylus is obvious and brilliant in the original but there is much dispute regarding a correct way to render the idea in English.*)

In rejoinder, the oily tongue, the subtly delicate sophistication of the expert in lip effects, exquisite artificer and judge of poetical lines, spread out adequately in meanings that are malicious through rending phrase from phrase, must interpret into negation the gigantic toil of the lungs of his opponent. (*The smooth and polished Euripides will, we are told, make mince meat of the big words of Aeschylus.*)

*Pandemonium within. Din of kettledrums outside. At the height of the uproar Pluto, god of the under world emerges—an exquisite ghost with curled hair and whiskers in ringlets, whose eyes emit sparks. He carries a sceptre and his robe trails after him. Now and then he disappears but reappears almost at once.*

*Pluto is followed by Aeschylus, a hobbling old man of ninety-two, very bald, with long beard, dressed in a dirty gown from which his slippered feet protrude gigantically.*

*Behind Aeschylus walks Euripides, a distinguished figure, well groomed, bearded, most deferential in gesture and clad in a tunic over which a beautiful cloak is thrown. Bacchus is just behind him.*

*Euripides. I won't get off the throne. Don't suggest it. I say that I'm better artist than he is.*



*Bacchus.* Aeschylus, why your reticence? You hear his remark.

*Euripides.* He will play the lofty creature to begin with. It's the grand manner he invariably struts with in his tragedies.

*Bacchus.* Oh, dear man, don't talk so big!

*Euripides.* I know this fellow and have long seen through him. He's a savage mortal in achievement, brazen in vocabulary, having an unharnessed, unbitted, unrestrained, unshut oral cavity, unspeakable in dissertation, indomitably loquacious, vociferating a vain syllabification!

*Aeschylus.* Is that so, you son of a kitchen garden goddess? (*His mother peddled vegetables.*) You hurl those words at me, do you? Compiler of inconsequentialities, purveyor of paucities, dramatiser of indigence, exploiter of histrionic beggary and ranting ragamuffin that you are! You won't say such things and laugh.

*Bacchus.* Whoa, Aeschylus! Don't, in your fury, make a brewery of your intestines.

*Aeschylus.* Not until I have fully exposed this creator of crippled caricatures for the braggart that he is!

*Bacchus* (*pretending to speak to people in the chorus*) Boy! Boy! Bring out a black lamb. A tempest is ready to break forth over our heads.

*Aeschylus* (*to Euripides*). Oh, you collector of Cretan solos, you innovator of incestuous inclinations in the field of dramatic art! (*Euripides did not keep one half of a chorus danc-*

*ing while the other sang. He took to such themes as the passion of Phaedra for her stepson and the love of Pasiphae for the bull.)*

*Bacchus.* Stop this, oh, highly esteemed Aeschylus! After this hail storm, oh naughty Euripides, get yourself out of the way, if you know what's what, so that he does not beat your brow with some word that would break a head and let the supreme creation of your brain escape. And you, Aeschylus, don't argue furiously but question and be questioned meekly. It is not becoming in men of poetical genius to rail at one another like women selling bread in the streets. You start roaring like a tree afire.

*Euripides.* Ready—that's what I am, to bite or to be bitten first just as this fellow pleases. The words, the music, the choruses, the very nerves of tragedy—I'm ready. And by Jove, for the Peleus too, and the Aeolus, and the Mel-eager (*his tragedies*) and for the Telephus, I'm ready! (*The Telephus was said to have been the supreme Euripidean tragedy—now lost.*)

*Bacchus.* Now, say, Aeschylus, what are you going to do?

*Aeschylus.* I didn't think of fighting here. A fight between the pair of us would not be on equal terms.

*Bacchus.* How's that?

*Aeschylus.* Because my poetical gift did not perish with me, but his did with him so that he will have it to recite here. (*He means that*

*his plays are still alive on earth and are hence not in Hades, like those of Euripides, which are dead on earth and have therefore descended to Hades).* However, since it seems proper to you, I needs must do what you say.

*Bacchus.* Let someone bring me incense and flame so that I may pray before the masterpieces and act as well as judge of this most literary of compositions. (*To the chorus.*) Will you be good enough to sing some song to the Muses?

*Chorus.* Oh, you nine holy virgins of Jove who gaze below upon the lightly worded conceits of men who make popular phrases each time they strive together like sophisticated wrestlers, come down now to contemplate the dire power of mouths apt in their equipment of syllables and saw dust. Now the gigantic intellectual fray is getting down to business!

*Bacchus.* Now pray, the two of you, before you say a word.

*Aeschylus.* Ceres, you who nursed my intellect, may I be worthy of your mysteries!

*Bacchus* (*To Euripides*). Now it's your turn to distribute a little incense.

*Euripides?* That's all right—but the gods to whom I pray are other ones.

*Bacchus.* Some that are peculiar to yourself or of a new crowd? (*A charge against Socrates.*)

*Euripides.* Why, certainly!

*Bacchus.* Then go and pray to your private and personal gods.

*Euripides.* Ether, my nurse, and pendulum of my tongue, and conscience, and scented orifices of my nasal organ, teach me well what words I am to choose! (*Goes inside followed by the others.*)

*Chorus* (*amid blowing of reeds and dancing*). And we too want to hear from these two wise men some words of sweetness. (*Spoken by a dancing girl.*)

On the war path, both of you! (*Spoken by a giant.*)

Let the two tongues be savage! (*Spoken by an elderly hag.*)

The mood of the pair is not without its touch of defiance. (*The speaker flourishes a club.*)

Nor are their minds unmoved. (*All now put in a word to egg on the pair.*)

It's obvious that one will say something he picked up in the city that will sound sophisticated.

The other fellow will tear his words up by the roots and rush at his foe while he scatters verses explosively. (*Aeschylus will advance with an artillery of fine language which Euripides will meet after a raking fire of sarcasms.*)

## SCENE VI

*Euripides emerges from the shadowy palace in a military costume with shield, escorted by ghosts of admirers. Bacchus with his retinue comes next. At last Aeschylus limps forth*

*majestically unattended but in a gorgeous robe with a garland on his bald head.*

**Bacchus.** We must all begin to speak as soon as possible. Speak what is urban in its amenity and don't use figures of rhetoric or say what anyone might think of.

**Euripides.** As regards myself and the kind of poetry I make, I will speak last of all. I'll say first of this fellow that he is a humbug and a fizzler in the things he fools audiences with. They come to him already accustomed to the imbecilities of Phrynicus. (*A famed playwright prone to lyric effects who relied upon one brilliant actor and a finely trained chorus for his great scenes.*) To begin with he made it a practice to begin with a seated figure—Achilles or Niobe—all muffled up so that the face did not show, a mere hint of tragedy without one spoken word.

**Bacchus.** No, not one.

**Euripides.** And his chorus would bombard us with four volleys of lyrics, one right after another, and the actors remained dumb.

**Bacchus.** I rejoiced at the silence. This thing pleased me no less than do those who do so much talking now.

**Euripides.** You were incompetent to pass judgment—rest assured of that.

**Bacchus.** I seem so even to myself. Why did he do such things—this, this—what do you call him? (*He indicates Aeschylus.*)

*Euripides.* It was his impudence, for the sake of keeping the man in the audience sitting in suspense until Niobe said something. Meanwhile the play would be nearly over.

*Bacchus.* The rascal—how I was fooled by him! (*To Aeschylus.*) Why do you gape and seem ill at ease?

*Euripides.* Because I'm testing him. Now when he had fooled away time like that and the play was half done he roared some dozen words like a bull having brows and plumes grim and terrible in their goblin-faced aspects and all unfamiliar to the audience.

*Aeschylus.* Well, I declare!

*Bacchus.* Hold your tongue!

*Euripides.* Yet not one plain word did he speak. Not one.

*Bacchus* (*To Aeschylus*). No clenching of teeth.

*Euripides.* It was with him either "Scamander" (*a river famed in war*) or "ditches" or "shields" or eagles like griffins on shields the form of words that it was not possible to of brass, to say nothing of jaw breakers in make sense of.

*Bacchus.* By the gods, I have myself already in the course of one long night gone without my sleep meditating upon his golden cock. What bird is that?

*Aeschylus.* A device on the ships, you unteachable lout. Painted!



**Bacchus.** Eryxis, son of Philozenus—that's who I thought it was (*A deformed reprobate who devoured prodigiously.*)

**Euripides.** Was it becoming to drag a cock into a tragedy?

**Aeschylus.** And you, enemy of the gods that you are, what were the things that you dragged into it?

**Euripides.** Not cocks, by Jove, nor goat billies in your style, which is that of the hanging curtains of the Medes with pictures on them. When I took over the art from you, the first thing I did was to reduce the bloated phraseology and the weight of words. I strained away the fatted verbiage with little lines that told what the plot was. I administered chatter in small doses taken from books. I brought tragedy up by means of monodies helped out with an infusion of Cephisophon (*a slave who is said to have helped Euripides write his plays but this slave was later involved in a love affair with the wife of Euripides. The latter was noted for his domestic troubles.*) Nor did I jabber away on any trifling theme nor by rushing at once into the heart of the plot did I bewilder the spectator of my pieces. The actor who came first on the stage told the audience what kind of a play it was, giving indeed the pedigree of the character he enacted.

**Bacchus.** That was better than giving your own. (*Although of low birth, Euripides was suspected of trying to ape aristocracy.*)

**Euripides.** Then from the very first words, I did not suffer the action to lag. Either a woman spoke up in my piece or a slave did no less or the master of the house or a maid or an old hag.

*Aeschylus.* And ought you not have perished for daring such things?

*Euripides.* By Apollo—I did these things to be democratic.

*Bacchus.* Let this go, nevertheless. You're not doing your best in turning around and about this.

*Euripides.* Well, I taught the characters to talk like that.

*Aeschylus.* Even I admit that. Before you taught anything of the kind you should have broken apart in the middle.

*Euripides.* And you taught the lugging in of queer quips and the lipping of liling lingoes and other things to contrive, to see, to wink at, to drivel, to improvise, to ape, to clown, to invent knowingly all sorts of things.

*Aeschylus.* That I, too, acknowledge.

*Euripides.* You dragged in people's domestic troubles, things that we all had learned of or were mixed up with, so that I might be put to the proof or even annoyed (*his own domestic troubles were notorious.*) These people (*the audience*) knowing all about the matter, would thus be able to criticise my devices (*as if they were borrowed from his own personal troubles rather than taken from actual historical tradition*). But I did not use lofty language so as to be above their heads and I did not stagger them with the introduction of swans and statues or horses hung with bells. You can easily tell his followers from mine. This fellow's followers are Phormisius (*a ranking orator politician*) as well as Magaenetus (*a servile character*) from Magnesia, bewhiskered

buglers or lancers and grimacing bandits of the pine trees who sneer through the piece they play whereas my followers include Cleitophon (*a dilettante but a genius*) and Theramenes of polished manners. (*The pine tree torture refers to a bandit who tied his victims to trees bent back which later flew apart and tore the helplessly bound in two.*)

**Bacchus.** Theramenes? Wise was that man and dire in all things—so that even if he fell into difficulties or was involved in them he knew how to fall out of them too.

**Euripides.** I really did teach my pupils in the playwright's art to be plausible my making the drama seem real (*to the audience*) so that now people know more about real life than they did and can manage their domestic affairs more wisely and see how complications may be smoothed away. Hence they may ask "how did this happen?" and "who took this?" and "how has this gone?" (*A political hit. The theory of the Athenian law was that the jury ran the trial, not the judge and that the jury decided domestic difficulties, by passing a sentence instead of the judge.*)

**Bacchus.** By the gods! Now every man among the Athenians when he comes home asks the members of the household all sorts of questions. "What's the jug?" "Who's been nibbling at this fish?" "Last year's bowl has disappeared." "Where's yesterday's garlic?" "Who ate the rest of the olives?" Until now they were intellectually incurious, milk sops, worldless, brainless dunces.

**Chorus** (*its members mimicking the famous scene in the "Myrmidons" of Aeschylus.*) You

behold these things, faithful Achilles? (*Spoken by a girl or by an actor dressed as a girl.*)

Come now, you, what will you say to this? (*Spoken by one dressed as a jurymen asking it of one attired as a defendant.*)

Don't let your anger run away with you and drive you out of the relevant. (*This member of the chorus continues the burlesque of a jurymen who is also a judge.*)

He has accused you of grave things! (*pointing to a defendant.*)

(*The chorus is now burlesquing a trial in which neither litigant can be represented by counsel, for the profession of lawyers was abolished.*)

Now, my noble man, see that you do not in your reply be transported with rage.

Shorten sail, make use of the tops of your halyards and masts and work your way slowly and gradually so that you'll get every advantage from the wind. (*A sailor on the jury speaks to the litigant represented in this vaudeville effect.*)

You, who first among the Greeks (*to Aeschylus*) built holy towers of sacred words, and adorned tragedy with emptiness, discharge your verbal stream with boldness.

(*Din of kettledrums in the chorus. All dance.*)

Aeschylus (*when the chorus has worn itself out*). I'm enraged at this collision and my bowels are all wrought up seeing that I am forced to reply to this fellow. However, so that he may not say I'm not equal to him, I ask him and how to tell me why a man who is a poet ought to be regarded with wonder.

Euripides. For his brilliance and intellect

and because he has made city dwellers brighter and more beautiful (*intellectually*).

*Aeschylus*. But if you haven't done this but instead have represented good and worthy beings as monsters of iniquity what will you confess yourself fit to suffer?

*Bacchus*. Oh, Death! But don't ask him. (*The burlesque of an Athenian jury trial is proceeding.*)

*Aeschylus*. Consider, now, what sort of characters he got from me to begin with (*the heroes and heroines of mythology and legend, Jove, Hercules, Hecuba and so on.*) See if they were not noble and strapping figures, and not slackers and loafers and loungers as they are now, nor malefactors. They were men who breathed defiantly, bore the lance, and white plumed helmets and battle axes and armor and had moods of roaring seven yells! (*A challenge to the foe.*) (*Or, had seven-hided souls.*)

*Euripides*. This nuisance is spreading. With his making of many helmets, he will bowl me over.

*Bacchus*. And what did you do that rendered them such noble beings? (*Aeschylus remains mute.*) *Aeschylus*, speak, don't be insolently majestic of mien and make trouble in that style.

*Aeschylus*. I made a theatre changed with war.

*Bacchus*. How so?

*Aeschylus*. I dramatized the seven against Thebes. (*The seven commanders who led seven hosts to the seven gates of Thebes comprised one of the renowned expeditions of antiquity and the play of Aeschylus on the subject was always highly esteemed.*) Every man who witnessed it burned to be a torch bearer.

**Bacchus.** This was a vile deed of yours. The Thebans have been rendered all the more courageous for the war. And for this you must be penalised.

**Aeschylus.** Yet it was in your power to exercise the same courage. You did not practice it. Then having afterwards performed the "Persians" (*dealing with the battle of Salamis and the flight of Xerxes*) I put in them enough courage to make them burn to triumph over their foes, a most magnificent masterpiece (of *tragedy*) being thus embellished.

**Bacchus.** I was glad then—because I heard Darius was dead and the chorus instantly clapped its hands and yelled "Hurrah!" (*The chorus really lamented in that tragedy.*)

**Aeschylus.** The very things that poetical men should do. Consider how from the beginning how helpful the poets have proved. Orpheus it was who showed us the mysteries and taught us to keep from killing. Musaios taught us cures for disease and oracles (*some suspect that Moses is somehow traceable in this obscure allusion*). Hesiod told us about works, the fruit seasons and the plowings. The divine Homer himself—from what did he derive honor and glory if not from teaching what is good, what is virtuous, the drill and the discipline of troops?

**Bacchus.** He did not teach Pantacles though, that most unenlightened of mankind! Only lately when he was parading he tied his helmet on backward and then tried to put the plume on it. (*This individual was an office holder who thus revealed his ignorance of military matters in war time.*)



*Aeschylus.* Many another good man I had for one of my characters—among them Lamachus was a hero. (*A stupid and incompetent commander in the Sicilian expedition. The idea of making him a hero was absurd.*) It was from him that I got my ideas of heroic Patroclus (*in the Iliad*) and his indomitable soul, and for Teucer of the lion heart (*a legendary hero of epics*). Thus I sought to excite the voters to rise to the level of such beings each time the trumpet sounded (*in the theatre.*) Not, by Jove, did I drag unchaste Phaedras upon the scene (*heroine of the "Hippolytus" of Euripides*) or Sthenoboea (*she played the part of Patiphar's wife in an episode like that of Joseph*). Nobody ever saw either an infatuated woman in any play I made.

*Euripides.* By Jove, neither was there any comprehension of the goddess of love in your work!

*Aeschylus.* Never may I do that sort of thing! But in you and in your work she was potent and yet in the end she got the best of you and worsted you (*his wife proved faithless*).

*Bacchus.* By Jove, that fits you well! The very thing you invented for others was the thing that tortured you.

*Euripides.* And what harm you wretched man, does my Sthenoboea do the town?

*Aeschylus.* You led well born dames and the wives of well born men to suicide from shame brought upon through the example of your Sthenoboea (*the scandalous private lives of some Athenians was said to have been encouraged by the plays of Euripides and your Bellerophon.*

*Euripides.* Is it that I invented a fanciful tale about Phaedra?

## THE FROGS

*Aeschylus.* By Jove, it was true! But the evil is what a poet should hide and not lead it forth as a model for imitation. To the childish he is their teacher who makes phrases to them and only to the mature is he the poet. Hence it is essential in us all to speak only of what is good.

*Euripides.* If then you drag in Lycabettus (*a mountain*) and Parnes (*another mountain*) is this teaching what is god by one who ought to use human language? (*In one of the lost plays of Aeschylus the dialogue of the divinities on the mountain peaks was too sublime to be intelligible.*)

*Aeschylus.* But, you wicked devil, the reason of great ideas and intellectual superiorities is for the begetting of big words. Moreover it is fitting that people who are half gods should use words more tremendous than our own. In fact they have clothes far holier than those we wear. When I had these things well established (*in the theatre*) you degraded them all.

*Euripides.* How?

*Aeschylus.* In the first place you put kings before us in rags so that they might seem objects of pity to ordinary men.

*Euripides.* Whom did I injure in doing so?

*Aeschylus.* These things have made the wealthy citizen intensely reluctant to hold the office of trierarch (*admiral or captain in the fleet*) and so he puts on rags and weeps and says he is a pauper (*to escape the assessment*).

*Bacchus.* With a fine under garment on, by Ceres! And while he is lying like that he goes where the fish are sold (*for a fine meal*!).

*Aeschylus.* Moreover, you taught the people to be wordy and chattering so that they do not

go upon the drill ground but wear out their skins on seats too comfortable when they are young. Then you taught the crew of the state galley to argue with their captains (*because that was enacted in his plays*). Now when I was alive they did not even know how to dare such things but only called for their porridge and yelled for the anchor to be heaved.

*Bacchus.* By Apollo, he did that—and they learned to discharge their bowels in the countenances of the men who plied the oars below on rows under their own (*in the galleys*) and if they got shore leave they only learned how to steal and now they have got so bad that they argue with their commanders and can no longer row forward or backward or this way or any other. (*Or, nowadays the oarsman gainsays his orders and refusing to row any longer, he sails about hither and thither.*)

*Aeschylus.* What evils has he not originated? Has he not brought procuresses upon the stage and illegitimate births in the holy places and sisters in incest with their brothers. Has he not said that to live is not to be alive? It is because of this our town is filled with scribblers and creatures who ape men (*pretending to be actors*) and thus befooling the people. As for carrying a torch, no one is able to do that any more for want of practice. (*Hence the signals necessary in war could no longer be relied upon*.)

*Bacchus.* By Jove, No—I was nearly dead from laughing at the Athenian revels when a slow man, all white and obese, pasty faced and puffing, seemed bent in two with his strainings and blowings, outrun as he seemed to be by all the other races and himself in a terrible stew

about it all, acting terribly. The men of Cera-meicus, at the gates, where he was running the gauntlet of the line of sight seers there dealt him slap after slap as he passed, some on the paunch, the sides, the thighs. Pummeled yet again and that by so many hands, he blew out the torch and fled. (*The prize went to him who first raced with the torch lighted to the goal.*)

*Chorus (its members still burlesquing a jury):*

The case is a celebrated one.

The feuds are many. (*Each remark by a separate speaker.*)

The war is getting hot.

It will be hard to decide.

When one pulls powerfully this way the other seems capable of straining with no less force the other way.

Now don't sit perpetually in one place.

There are ever and ever so many other arguments to come.

Whatever you have to fight about, speak it out, spit it forth, rake up what is new and what is old.

Do try hard to say something clever as well as wise.

If you are afraid to do that, because we spectators are so stupid and your brilliance will thus be above our heads, remember that you have ceased to be such fine wits as you were (*or, we have been so sharpened that we are as bright as yourselves*).

They are fighters themselves for they have each a book and from it they picked up the art of quarreling. (*Or, they learned the right lessons.*)

Their natures are powerful.

Their wits have been whetted.  
Don't be afraid.

Spit it all out, for the benefit of the audience,  
just as if it were made up of intelligent people.

(*Din of kettledrums. Dancing around. Bacchus leads the rout behind the palace, Euripides dancing along while Aeschylus hobbles painfully after.*)

## SCENE VII

*The rear of the palace of the king and queen of Hades. The same characters appear but the members of the chorus are now somewhat tipsy from the quantity of libations poured out in honor of Bacchus. Bacchus himself staggers but is upheld by the pretty girl in the torn dress. Euripides is flushed with wine. Aeschylus is perfectly sober and majestic in mien.*

*Bacchus makes frenzied signals for silence and the din of kettledrums subsides.*

*Euripides.* Now then—I'll turn to your prologues. (*He turns to the chorus.*) My object is first of all to look into the first part of the tragedy of this deep one (*indicates Aeschylus*). He was unskilled in the phrasing of his situation.

*Bacchus.* What one of his (*plays*) will you put to the ordeal?

*Euripides.* Lots and lots. Recite first of all something from the play about Orëstes. (*Din of kettledrums.*)

*Bacchus.* Say, there—be quiet, every man of you! Say on, Aeschylus.

*Aeschylus.* Earthly Mercury! guardian of your father's might, be the savior and the ally to me, who invoke you. I've come up into this

country and I'm going down again. (*Lines from an opening scene in an Aeschylean masterpiece, conceded to be obscure.*)

Bacchus. Have you fault to find with these?

Euripides. More than a dozen.

Bacchus. But all the lines together are but three.

Euripides. Each, though, his twenty errors. (*Din of kettledrums. Furious gestures in the chorus, the members of which are in a condition of obvious inebriety. Aeschylus makes frenzied gestures to be heard. Euripides hops and skips.*)

Bacchus. (*He stops the din with a signal.*) Aeschylus, I beg you to be quiet. If you don't, you'll find yourself penalized for something worse than your three iambic verses.

Aeschylus. Must I keep silent for this chap?

Bacchus. If you'll be led by me.

Euripides. He's been guilty of what cries to heaven.

Aeschylus. Don't you see you're maudlin?

Euripides. It doesn't matter to me, much.

Aeschylus. How do you make out I'm in error?

Euripides. Again from the beginning, say it.

Aeschylus. Earthly Mercury, guardian of your father's might—

*Hullaballoo in the chorus. Silence restored with difficulty.*

Euripides. Then Orestes—this is what he says at the tomb of his dead father?

Aeschylus. I speak nothing else (*but that*).

Euripides. Then Mercury, while a father was slain by the hand of his own wife by means of *artive* falsities, looked on indifferently?



**Bacchus.** Not that one! The Mercury he addressed was a kind and nice one, the earthly one. This was made evident in his statement that he spoke to the earthly (*as distinguished from the hellish*) god, who got his power from his papa.

**Euripides** (*to Aeschylus*). Then you've erred all the more grievously, more than I require (*for my case*). That is, if he (*indicating Bacchus*) got his power from an earthly sire. (*Bacchus was accused of being no real child of Jove and Euripides shows how tipsy he is getting by such an allusion when the paternity of Mercury has been mentioned.*)

**Bacchus.** He'd then be a tomb troubler for his father's sake. (*Bacchus visited a tomb for his mother's sake, thus making trouble in Thebes. He staggers.*)

**Aeschylus.** Bacchus, you drink a wine that needs sweetening (*said of those who spoke indiscreetly when drunk*).

**Bacchus** (*supported by two girls from the chorus*). Recite another for him. You (*to Euripides*) look out for any blunder (*or imbecility*).

**Aeschylus.** A savior be to me and an ally, who implore you, for I've come up into this country and I'm going down again. (*Greeks always spoke of going "up" into a country and "down" again to the sea.*)

**Euripides.** Twice now the same thing has been said to us by the wise Aeschylus.

**Bacchus.** How twice?

**Euripides.** Scan the expression. I'll speak it for you. I've come up into the country, he

says, and I'm going down again. Now I've come is the same as I'm going down.

*Bacchus.* Yes, by Jove—just as if one were to say to a neighbor: let me have a kneading trough or if you prefer a trough to knead in.

*Aeschylus.* That isn't it, you tipsy stutterer, but it's the best way it can be put, (*by you*).

*Bacchus.* How so? Instruct me regarding what you refer to.

*Aeschylus.* To go into a country is possible to anyone who leaves his own fatherland. He has come without any calamity (*urging him*). It is the fugitive who comes (*up*) and then goes down.

*Bacchus.* Well put, by Apollo! What say you, Euripides?

*Euripides.* I don't say Orestes went down home. He arrived by stealth, not trusting the rulers.

*Bacchus.* Well put, by Mercury! What you say I don't understand. (*Staggers tipsily.*)

*Euripides.* Then try another.

*Bacchus.* Go try yourself, Aeschylus. Do! You (*to Euripides*) look for the blunder.

*Aeschylus.* On this slope of his tomb I summon my father to listen, to hear! (*Line from an Aeschylean tragedy about Orestes.*)

*Euripides.* There's another he says again. Listen! Hear! They're certainly the same.

*Bacchus.* It was to the dead he spoke, you imbecile, the dead whom we couldn't move if we called them three times.

*Aeschylus.* You (*to Euripides*) how did you compose your prologues?

*Euripides.* I'll tell (*Or, I'm going to recite*).

If I say the same thing twice or if you find any verbiage in it that's alien to the scope of the plot, spit on the floor.

*Bacchus.* Go on, recite! I must test the accuracy of the lines of your prologues. (*Staggers.*)

*Euripides.* Oedipus was originally a lucky man. (*Opening line of a lost play by Euripides.*)

*Aeschylus.* By Jove—not at all! He was a poor devil by birth for before ever he was conceived Apollo predicted he would slay his father. How was he originally a lucky man?

*Euripides.* Then he became later the most suffering of mortals.

*Aeschylus.* Not at all, by Jove! He did not cease being unlucky from birth. How could he? When first he was born in the winter they thrust him out in a crock so that he might not be brought up to become his father's murderer. Then it was that he went to Polybus with his feet swollen (*Polybus adopted Oedipus, whose name means swollen feet*). And then he wed an old woman, although himself a youth and she besides being his own mother. Then he blinded himself.

*Bacchus.* How lucky he would have been had he commanded the forces together with Eerasinides! (*Executed for his part in a disastrous fight at sea.*)

*Euripides.* You're maudlin. I make prologues that are beautiful.

*Aeschylus.* And now by Jove I won't at a single word damn your phrases but with the

aid of the gods I shall by means of your own oil make your prologues stink.

*Euripides.* With a bottle of my oil (looking around for it)—you! Mine! (*The idea that the intimate human touches of Euripides, his peculiar flavor, could be imparted by an Aeschylus is absurd, he means.*)

*Aeschylus.* One only will do. You do your work so that everything is reduced to your style. The bit of parchment, the little oil flask and the bit of a bag reek in your iambic metres. (*Euripides was a literary man whose plays showed not life but art. They were what we now call "bookish." Literary men then had a bit of parchment, a small flask of oil and a bag to hold the writing implements, just as now they have a fountain pen, ink (oil) and paper, or a typewriter.*) I will show you at once right here now.

*Euripides.* Indeed? You'll show?

*Bacchus.* Now it's time to recite.

*Aeschylus.* That's what I say.

*Euripides.* Aegyptus, as most people spread the story, with fifty sons in a ship, touched at Argos. (*Opening lines of a lost Euripidean tragedy.*)

*Aeschylus.* Oil ruined this.

*Bacchus.* What's this about oil or a flask of oil? Isn't it something to cause tears (*Bacchus knows nothing about literary matters yet he sits in judgment upon them*). Recite him another prologue, so that he may recognize one again.

*Euripides.* Bacchus, vested in the fawn skin and carrying the thrysus (*Bacchic wand*),

having lighted torches, bounds with them in the revel dance.

*Aeschylus.* A flask of oil wasted! (*Not worth the oil with which the ink was mixed to write it with.*)

*Bacchus.* Oh, bosh! We're stung again with this oil flask.

*Euripides.* It won't be anything at all. Against this prologue he'll have no oil flask. To burn. No man lives who is altogether happy. Either he is born noble without wealth or being base born—

*Aeschylus.* A flask of oil wasted!

*Bacchus.* Euripides!

*Euripides.* What is it?

*Bacchus.* It seems to me time to give in. That oil flask scents everything a lot.

*Euripides.* By Ceres—I would not even think of such a thing! Now is the very moment the thing will be snatched from him.

*Bacchus.* Come, then, recite another one and keep the flask of oil out of it.

*Euripides.* The Sidonian city having been deserted by Cadmus, son of Agenor—

*Aeschylus.* A flask of oil wasted!

*Bacchus.* Oh, best of men, take that flask of oil so that he may not ruin prologues for us.

*Euripides.* What? I take from him? (*Some versions render the word as "buy" but this ruins the point.*)

*Bacchus.* Yes—if you'll be led by me.

*Euripides.* By no means—for many prologues I have yet to recite in which this fellow will find no oil to mix (*or to burn. The oil was mixed with the matter in the bag to make*

*ink.*) Pelops, son of Tantalus, to Pisa coming on fast horses—

*Aeschylus.* A flask of oil wasted!

*Bacchus.* You see? He added his flask of oil to this as well. Come, my good man, even now give up the whole of this art. (*Or, give it to him by all means. You'll get a good and new one for a coin.*)

*Euripides.* By Jove, not yet! I've still many a prologue left. Oineus once from the earth—

*Aeschylus.* A flask of oil wasted!

*Euripides.* Let me recite the whole of the lines first. Oineus once from the earth reaping a rich harvest, offered the first fruits—

*Aeschylus.* A flask of oil wasted!

*Bacchus.* When he made his offerings? Why who snatched it off (*the altar—oil was used to make the incense*).

*Euripides.* Never mind him. Let him say something to this: Jove, as is said with truth—

*Bacchus.* Destroys you (*the word "waste" or "ruin" or "destroy" also meant any idea of devastation and Bacchus is making a pun. Consider our "wasting the midnight oil"*). He'll only say a flask of oil is wasted. This flask of oil is all over your prologues like styes in the eyes. Let us now in the name of the gods turn to his music (*or lyrics*).

*Euripides.* Well now I can prove him to have been a vile composer of (*lyric*) melody and one who was that all the time.

(*Wild uproar in the chorus, the members of which are now tipsier than ever. All rush around to the front of the palace.*)



## SCENE VIII

*Front of the Palace. The members of the chorus are grouped on the pillared portico. A few are overcome with liquor. Bacchus emerges from the crowd and walks down the steps to the lawn on which Aeschylus is musing apart. At that moment Euripides emerges from the rear.*

*Chorus (one tipsy reveller speaking):* How will this case turn out?

*(Another)* I'll have to think that over.

What fault can he find with this man (*indicating Aeschylus*) who has made by far the most melodies of anybody until now? (*Spoken by a drunken old man.*)

I'm amazed that anyone should dream of finding fault with this king of all whom Bacchus has inspired. (*Spoken by a youth.*)

I fear for him (*said by a girl*).

*Euripides (confronting the chorus).* To be sure those melodies of his are to be wondered at. That I will show and soon. From one of his melodies all the rest can be judged. (*Or, I will reduce all his lyric measures to one only*).

*Bacchus.* Now I'll act as umpire and cast the votes, having the ballots. (*He shows the pebbles used as counters in such cases. The sound of flutes is heard from the chorus.*)

*Euripides.* Achilles of Phthia, how comes it that although you hear the agonizing blows, you hasten not to our aid? We dwellers beside the meadow pay reverence to our ancestor Mercury. Ah, the agony which you do not hasten

to relieve (*Or, Oh, agony! You are not coming to help us*).

*Bacchus.* Two agonies there for you, Aeschylus! (*He refers to the use of the same word twice.*)

*Euripides.* You most illustrious of the Achaians, sovereign son of Atreus, be advised by me. Oh, agony! You are not coming to help us.

*Bacchus.* The third for you, Aeschylus. The third agony!

*Euripides.* Be gracious in speech. Near by are the priestesses of Diana to open the temple. Oh, agony, you are not coming to help us! I am master of the message that will make a path for our men from this place. Oh, agony! You are not coming to help us!

*Bacchus.* Oh, royal Jove! How many agonies are exploited here? I'd like to go bathing. With all these agonies my kidneys are inflamed.

*Euripides.* No! Not before you hear another measure of his in the melodious lyric worked out according to his rules for the lyre.

*Bacchus.* Come, then, let us have it, but don't pile on the agony.

*Great agitation in the chorus. The members drink and dance until one song or refrain from the lyres dominates the rest.*

*Euripides.* Say now how the dire war bird despatches the double lorded host of the Achaians, spear in hand to avenge! (*He mimics an Aeschylean actor majestically.*)

*Chorus.* Tof-lat-to-thrat!      Tof-lat-to-thrat!  
(*Din of kettledrums.*)

*Euripides.* (*Stalking triumphantly.*) He sends that bitch, the Sphinx, disastrous and disagreeable!

*Chorus.* Tof-lat-to-thrat!

*Euripides.* (*Pausing to glare defiantly.*) With hand and vengeful lance we see the divine birdie—

*Chorus.* Tof-lat-to-thrat.

*Euripides.* Meet the hounds that range the upper reaches of the air. (*He sniffs and barks.*)

*Chorus.* Tof-lat-to-thrat.

*Euripides.* They're hanging now upon Ajax.

*Chorus.* Tof-lat-to-thrat! Tof-lat-to-thrat!

*Bacchus.* What's this tof-lat-to-thrat? Is it an echo of Marathon (*where the Persians yelled and screamed*) or where did you get hold of this rope puller's chorus? (*In Greece the toilers sang as they worked, like toilers in Mediterranean countries today when they labor in gangs.*)

*Aeschylus.* At any rate, I welded things of beauty into a beautiful thing so that I might not be seen cultivating the same meadow of the Muses as Phrynicus (*a poet-melodist as well as a tragedian, ridiculed by Aristophanes*). This fellow catches up his refrains from all the harlots, or from the drinking choruses of Melitus (*a driveling songster*), or the echoings of Charian flutists (*cheap musicians in cabarets*) or dances or funeral notes. All this will soon be plain. (*To the chorus.*) One of you bring me a lyre. (*Tipsy din in the chorus.*) But why need a lyre for such things? Where is she who was rattling those bones? (*Din in the chorus mounts.*) Here, Muse of Euripides! (*Girl is*

*thrown from the chorus. She is tipsily rattling a pair of bones.)* The song is adapted to singing in tune with her.

**Bacchus.** She was never the Muse of Lesbian love, surely. (*The reference is to a lost Euripidean play.*)

**Aeschylus.** Oh, fabled sister birds, you halcyons carolling by the sea's eternal billow, wetting with drops sprayed from your feathers the bodies you besprinkle, and ho, you spiders, that rest beneath the eaves of houses there to we-we-we-we-weave with your legs the threads you spin from yourselves for your singing web and, oh, you dolphins, infatuated with the flute that brings you leaping about the bows of the ships cleaving the wave—prophecies as well as races. (*The great German scholar Kock says we have here a burlesque of a typical Euripidean chorus. There is much here, at any rate, to suggest the choruses in the "Hippolytus" and what comes next suggests the choruses in the "Bacchantes".*) The joy in the vine, the clustering twined grape, how it eases labor! Embrace me, child, by throwing your elbows around! (*The girl accompanying all this with the bones thrusts forth her leg.*) You see the foot?

**Bacchus.** I see.

**Aeschylus.** (*Not understanding.*) What? You see it? (*The metrical foot.*)

**Bacchus.** I see.

**Aeschylus.** (*Turning upon Euripides.*) Yet, you, doing such things in the way of melody and lyric, dare to censure my rhythm. That's what your lyric music is. I'd like to illustrate

the style of your monologues. (*He strikes an attitude.*)

Oh, Night's shadowy black, what a dire dream you have sent me from the nowhere, an agent of Hades, having a soulless soul, offspring of black night, a thrilling, fearful spectacle, ebony hued in attire, looking slaughterously, slaughterously and equipped with tremendous talons. But menials, light a lamp for me and in pitchers from the river bring me drawn moisture. Warm the water so that I may with it wipe out the godly ghostly vision. Oho, briny demon, there they are! (*Wipes out imaginary picture with an imaginary mop.*) Oho, neighbors (*to the chorus*), behold these terrible things! Having snatched my cock, Glyce has got away! Ye nymphs, mountain born, and madness, seize her! (*Merry explains that a woman who falls asleep while spinning a thread has a dream that her neighbor Glyce robbed her hen roost—the thing being worked up by Aeschylus as a parody of the manner of Euripides.*) I, wretched woman, at my task so busy with a wheel charged with yarn we-we-we-weaving with two hands a roll of cloth so that with the dawn to market I might hie me, taking it along to peddle. And he, he (*the cock*) flew up, flew up, into the air with the exquisitely delicate tips of his wings (*Pantomime of the pursuit of the cock*) leaving me behind in agony and agony and agony, dropping tears, tears, from my eyes, oh miserably doomed of things that I am! Come, Cretans, offspring of Ida, seizing your bows, shield me and with energetic gestures of your limbs, shaking them out, sur-

round the house! With you let lovely Diana, having her dogs along, go at top speed through the house. And you, born of Jove, with the double torches, held up in a pair of nimble hands, goddess Hecate, light me to the abode of Glyce so that going in I may make a search!

*Bacchus.* Let's stop these melodies now.

*Aeschylus.* Even I've had enough. I want to put this fellow (*Euripides*) to the test of the scales. In that way only will the poetry of each of us be weighed. The force of our phrases will thus be put to the proof.

*Bacchus (to the chorus).* Draw near, then. It seems the art of these two poets must be measured in the cheese shop style. (*The leader of the chorus, a merchant in the cheese line, supervises the erection of an enormous pair of balances. While the scales are being tested, various members of the chorus make remarks.*)

*Chorus.* They're diligent, these deep ones.

This is a new prodigy.

Most strange!

Who else would have invented it?

By the gods!

I would not have believed these things if anybody had told me. I would have said this fellow was jesting with these things.

*The immense weighing machine, is now adjusted and Aeschylus is to shout a line into one side of the scales and Euripides will shout a line into the other.*

*Bacchus.* Come, now, post yourselves beside the balances.

*Aeschylus.* Here!

*Euripides.* Here!



**Bacchus.** Take hold, both of you and say your sentence and don't drop the balance until I say the word—cuckoo!

**Aeschylus.** We have it.

**Euripides.** We have it.

**Bacchus.** Now the words—say them into the scales.

**Euripides.** Oh, that the ship Argo had not flown—(*a line from a tragedy of his*).

**Aeschylus.** Oh, Sperchian stream and flock-bearing fields—(*a line from one of his tragedies*).

**Bacchus.** Cuckoo! Stop! Much lower this one's (*Aeschylus*) has gone.

**Euripides.** What can be to blame?

**Bacchus.** Because he put in a river. Like a wool dealer he's made wet his words as if they were fleeces. You put in a winged word.

**Euripides.** Now, another. Let him put it in.

**Bacchus.** Grab it now once more.

**Aeschylus.** Ready!

**Euripides.** Ready!

**Bacchus.** Speak!

**Euripides.** There is nothing sacred to persuasion except words. (*A line from his tragedies.*)

**Aeschylus.** Alone of the gods Death no gift desires. (*A line from his tragedies.*)

**Bacchus.** Stop! Stop! Why his (*Aeschylus'*) side is also falling once more. He put Death in—the heaviest of woes.

**Euripides.** And I Persuasion—the word that is best said.

**Bacchus.** Persuasion is light and has no intellect. Another one—look for it and that one

that is heavy weighing. Something that will jab the scale down powerful and huge.

*Euripides.* Where have I such a one? Where?

*Bacchus.* I'll say it. Achilles has thrown two aces and a four. (*A line from a Euripidean tragedy in which Achilles and other commanders are throwing dice. Doctor Merry notes that Bacchus maliciously suggests a trivial line when something big and weighty was in demand.*) Speak! This is the last weighing for each of you.

*Euripides.* An iron-studded stick he held in his right hand. (*A line of his.*)

*Aeschylus.* After one chariot another chariot and behind each corpse another corpse. (*A line of his.*)

*Bacchus.* He's got the best of you again.

*Euripides.* In what way?

*Bacchus.* He dragged in two chariots and two corpses, which could not be lifted even by a hundred Egyptians. (*Egyptians did the hardest labor.*)

*Aeschylus.* Not with me need he test word with word. Let him get into the scales himself, wife, children, Cephisophon (*his wife's alleged paramour*) and then he may get in with all his books. (*Euripides had a large library.*) I'll just say two lines of my own.

*A loud din in the chorus announces a new arrival on the scene—Pluto, god of the under world. Bacchus joins in the din and then makes a signal for silence.*

*Bacchus.* These men are friends (*indicating the two poets*). I won't pass judgment upon

them. I won't become a foe to either. One I deem a sage. The other I like.

*Pluto.* Then you won't do what you came here for?

*Bacchus.* And if I give judgment?

*Pluto.* Taking the other along you may go, whichever you condemn, so that you do not come in vain.

*Bacchus.* Good luck to you! Here, believe me. I came down for a poet.

*Pluto.* What good is one?

*Bacchus.* In case the city is saved he may lead the dances. Whichever one of you (*to the poets*) can do the city any benefit, that one I think I will lead out of here. In the first place as regards Alcibiades (*the brilliant but unprincipled statesman of Athens*) what view does each of you entertain? The city is in labor. (*Or, the birth pangs of the town are hard.*) (*Athens is in agony because of Alcibiades.*)

*Euripides.* Has it any opinion of him at all?

*Bacchus.* Any? It wants him and it is his enemy and yet it wishes to have him. But what you think of him, that say out.

*Euripides.* I despise a citizen who is swift to serve himself and slow to serve his country—useful to his own interests and prejudicial to those of his native land.

*Bacchus.* Well said, by Neptune! (*To Aeschylus.*) What opinion have you?

*Aeschylus.* It is not wise to rear a lion's whelp in the city. However, if anyone has brought up a lion's whelp, he must adapt himself to its ways.

*Bacchus.* By saving Jove, I've something dif-

ficult to decide! One speaks wisely and the other knowingly. However, let each speak yet another opinion regarding the measure or the thing that will save the city (*in the extremity of the war*).

*Euripides.* (*He now says something which has baffled translators altogether.*) If anyone, having feathered Cleiocritus with Cinesias (that is, having attached the light man, like a pair of wings, to the heavy one),—the breezes should waft them over the ocean surface—if they should engage in a sea fight and then, holding vinegar cruets in their hands, should sprinkle them in the eyes of our foes. (*This is the rendering of the learned Doctor Merry and it is as faithful as anything suggested by the German Doctor Kock or the Dutch Van Leeuwen.*)

*Bacchus.* This seems absurd. Has it any sense?

*Euripides.* Yes—if we are in a sea fight and have vinegar cruets we could sprinkle the contents into the eyes of our foes. I know what I'm talking about and I want to explain it.

*Bacchus.* Say on.

*Euripides.* When those things which are incredible we deem credible and the things that are credible we find incredible. (*Or, if those we now trust we don't trust and those we don't trust now we do trust.*) (*Parody of an oracle in tragedy.*)

*Bacchus.* How? I don't understand? Nothing so obscure could be said more clearly.

*Euripides.* If the citizens we now trust we cease to trust and those whom now we do not

employ we take into our service, we shall be saved. If what we now do injures us why should we not be helped if we do the exact opposite?

*Bacchus.* Good, oh, Palamedes! (*A great inventive genius as well as a hero of the Trojan war.*) How much the wisest by nature you must be! Did you hit upon this yourself or did Cephisophon?

*Euripides.* I alone. The vinegar cruets were Cephisophon's.

*Bacchus (to Aeschylus).* What have you to say?

*Aeschylus.* Tell me to begin with by whom the city is benefitted? Is it not by the good?

*Bacchus.* What? It hates the worst? (*Ironically.*)

*Aeschylus.* Does it not rejoice in the evil?

*Bacchus.* Not exactly, but it uses them against its will.

*Aeschylus.* How could anyone save a city to whom neither the cloak (*garb of the rich*) nor the goat skin (*garb of the poor*) was friendly?

*Bacchus.* He must be found, by Jove, if the rising sun is to be seen again. (*Or, if you mean to rise to earth above.*)

*Aeschylus.* There (*above*) I could tell (*the man*). Here I don't want to.

*Bacchus.* You need not yourself, but send up something that's good.

*Aeschylus.* When what is their own in territory they regard as the enemy's and what is the enemy's territory they regard as their own, making their ships their land and their land shipless. (*This is the obscure style of oracle*

in tragedy and parodies the talk of Aeschylean priestesses. The idea is that in the next campaign they must invade the foe's country while the foe is invading theirs and turn the war into a naval struggle instead of letting it remain a land battle.)

Bacchus. Good! But the jury (pointing to the chorus) will want to consume all the spoils in drink. (A hit at the cost of jury trials.)

Pluto. You shall be judge and jury yourself.

Bacchus. Which of these (*Euripides* or *Aeschylus*) shall I give the decision to? I'll take the one my soul delights in.

*Euripides*. Remember the gods by whom you swore and take me home. Remember your friends! (A couplet from one of his lost tragedies.)

Bacchus. It was the tongue alone that swore. (A quotation from a Euripidean tragedy.) I choose Aeschylus.

*Euripides*. What have you done, vilest of men? (A parody of one of his lines.)

Bacchus. I? I've judged Aeschylus the winner. Why not?

*Euripides*. Caught in the very basest of acts, you dare look me in the face? (A parody of his manner.)

Bacchus. What's base about it if the spectators (indicating the audience) approve?

*Euripides*. Oh, wretch, you gaze upon me dying? (A highly characteristic Euripidean line.)

Bacchus (parodying *Euripides*). Who knows if to live be not to die, if to breathe be not to



dine, if to sleep be not to be in bed (*A burlesque of the poet's rationalism.*)

*Pluto.* Now, Bacchus, get inside.

*Bacchus.* What's that?

*Pluto.* So that you may be my guest before you depart. (*Din in the chorus. Girl rattles bones.*)

*Bacchus.* Well meant, by Jove! I'm not displeased by the suggestion. (*Dances with the girl in the torn dress.*)

*Chorus.* Blessed is the man who has a good conscience. (*Drinks, the speaker being slightly tipsy.*)

One must learn from many (*not a few*). Oh, many! (*Drinks*).

He who was seen to be wise (*Aeschylus*) is going back home.

Only by moderations (*drinks long and deep*) can good be wrought for one's fellow citizens and for one's friends and one's family.

It's a good thing we don't have to sit down near Socrates to gabble with him while we give up good literature and neglect the great triumphs of tragic art (*the chorus rejoices that it need not endure Socrates in hell, his practice being to talk philosophy on the street corners while sensible people were at the play*).

To loaf away the time in the use of fine phrases and to be funny about trifles is the practice of an imbecile (*the charge against Socrates*).

*Pluto.* Go off rejoicing, Aeschylus, and save our city (*Athens*) with words of wisdom and teach the witless. They are many. Give this (*hands him a rope of the kind suggesting*

*suicide by hanging*) to Cleophon and this to the War Board (*handing poison cup to him*) made up of Myrmex and Nichomachus and let Archenomus have a dose of it too (*three politicians*). Tell them to come down here to hell and be quick about it. If they don't arrive soon, by Apollo, I'll brand them and tie them hand and foot with Adeimantus (*a commander accused of treason*) of the White Crest (*a region but the term for a coward*) and soon banish him from earth.

*Aeschylus*. I'll do these very things. Give my throne here to Sophocles to occupy for me and to be my defense if ever again I come back here. Him I believe in wisdom to be second only to myself. Remember! Never let this evil fellow (*Euripides*), this dealer in false phrases, this buffoon, seat himself upon my throne, even against his will.

*Pluto*. (*To the chorus*): Now light him with your holy torches and lead the way with echoes of his own melodies and his own songs. (*He watches the formation of the procession with Bacchus at the head holding the girl with the torn dress while the girl with the bones holds him.*)

*Chorus*. (*Spoken by the tipsy clown.*) First of all a good voyage to the departing poet dismissed from here to the light of day above. (*He drinks long and deep.*)

The devils under the earth wish favorable breezes to the city of the great and good. (*Din of kettle-drums—procession starts, Aeschylus borne on the shoulders of four stalwart youths.*)

Soon we'll have rest from those weary woes

of armed marches by revelling in this style. (*Drinks and dins.*)

Let Cleophon do the fighting. (*Or, since he was under indictment for his course in the war. Let Cleophon fight his side of the case before us.*)

Others prefer this sort of thing in the fields of their fatherland. (*Or, if Cleophon must fight let him fight elsewhere than on native soil.*)

*Grand march on and up, accompanied by dins of flutes, tipsy choruses, yells of Yo-ho-ho! in the accents of Bacchus, rattling of bones, Aeschylus holding his seat with difficulty on the shoulders of the four youths. Loud braying of the donkey of Xanthias heard off the stage.*

THE END

OTHER WORKS BY ALEXANDER HARVEY  
IN THE LITTLE BLUE BOOKS

Essays on Aeschylus, No. 475.

Essays on Euripides, No. 473.

Essays on Sophocles, No. 474.

Essays on Jesus, No. 532.

Essays on the Friends of Jesus, No. 533.

Translations of

The Bacchantes, Euripides, No. 418.

Medea, Euripides, No. 500.

Hippolytus, Euripides, No. 502.

Electra, Euripides, No. 560.

Oedipus, Sophocles, No. 511.

Antigone, Sophocles, No. 562.

Electra, Sophocles, No. 623.

The Clouds, Aristophanes, No. 647.

The Birds, Aristophanes, No. 759.

The Knights, Aristophanes, No. 801.

